Commentary

Volume Fifty-eight, Number Three, September 1974

Kissinger & the Yom Kippur War

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK AND WALTER LAQUEUR

Delmore
WILLIAM BARRETT

Ethnicity and the Schools
NATHAN GLAZER

Erik Erikson's America
DAVID GUTMANN

The Idea of Decadence
RENEE WINEGARTEN

Movie Chronicle
WILLIAM S. PECHTER

Vested Interests
RALPH A. RAIMI

Books In Review:

Jeane Kirkpatrick / John W. Aldridge / Jeffrey Marsh
Frank Lipsius / Joshua Rubenstein / Gertrude Himmelfarb

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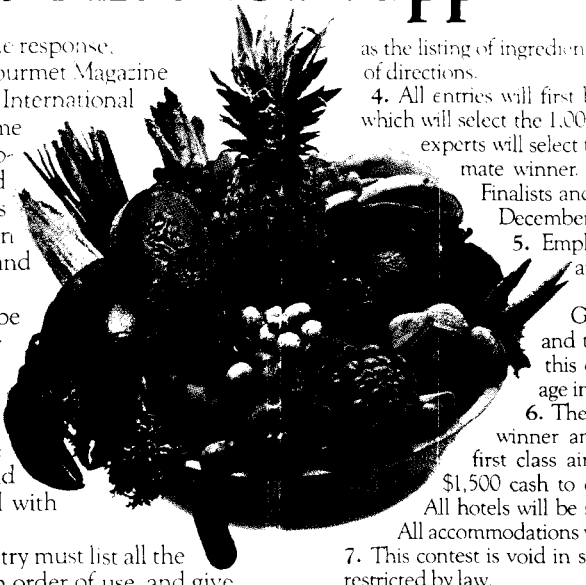

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4. All entries will first be reviewed by Creative Food Service, Inc. which will select the 1,000 best recipes. Gourmet Magazine's panel of experts will select the 25 semi-finalists, 5 finalists and the ultimate winner. The decisions of the judges will be final. Finalists and semi-finalists will be notified on or before December 31, 1974.
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8. To be eligible for judging, all entries must be postmarked no later than midnight, November 15, 1974. None will be returned. All entries become the property of Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc. who will have the right to use the names and likenesses of all finalists and the ultimate winner for advertising, publicity and promotional purposes.
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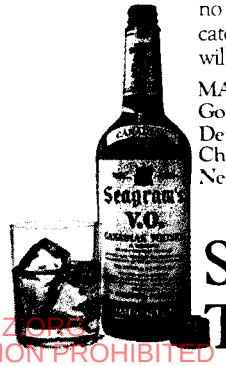

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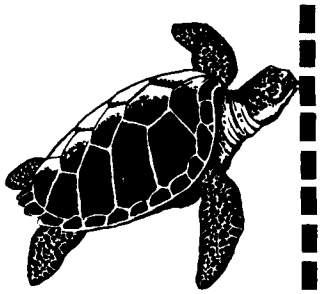

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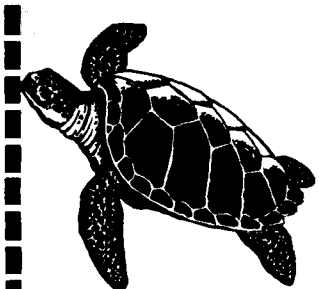

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Commentary

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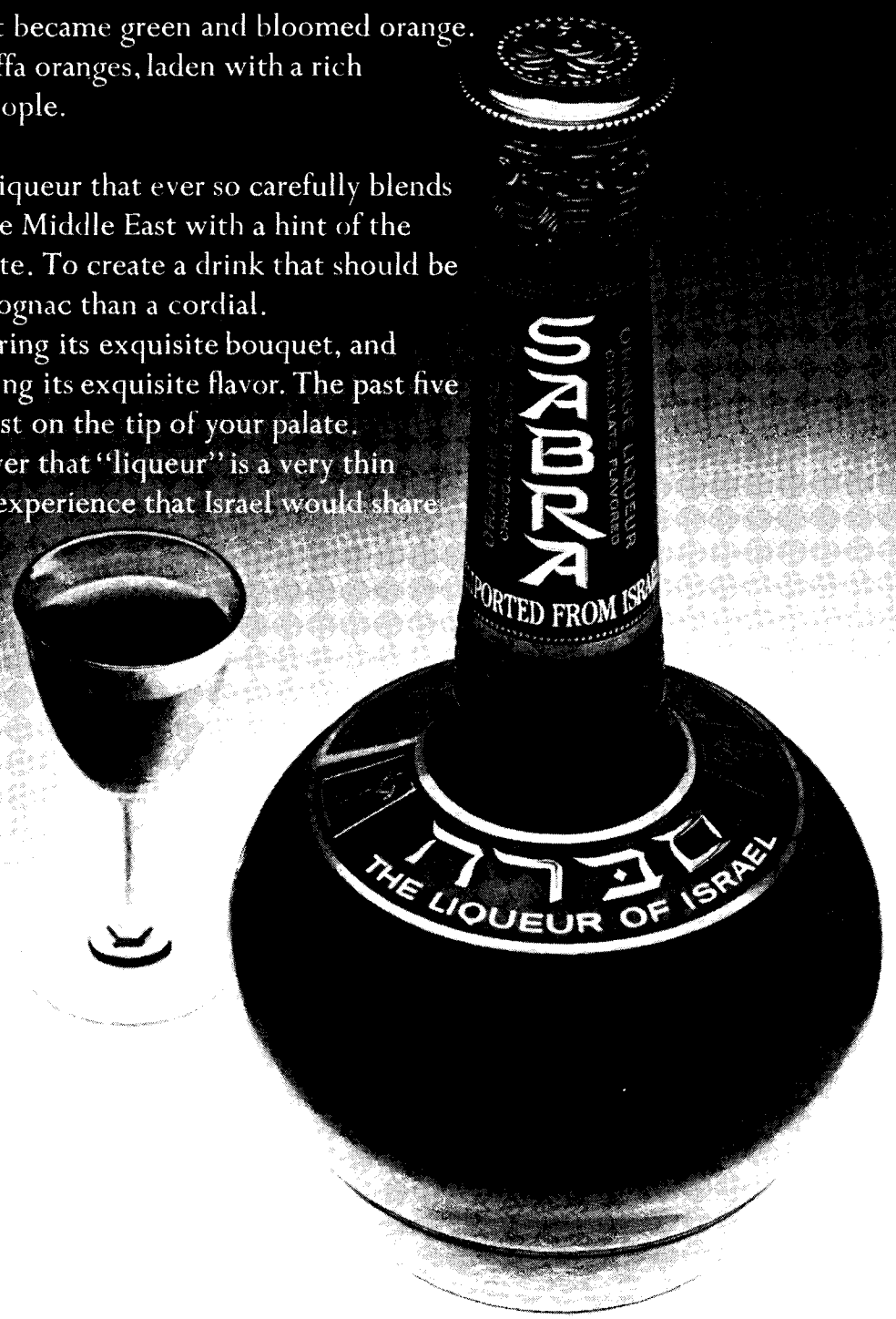

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Letters from Readers

Woodrow Wilson

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel P. Moynihan, writing to the query, "Was Woodrow Wilson Right?" [May], quotes the peroration of Wilson's last great speech, the one delivered at Pueblo, Colorado, only a few hours before he suffered the paralytic stroke from which he never entirely recovered. Immediately afterward, Mr. Moynihan quotes from an article that I wrote twenty years later, observing that if Wilson was right, the rest—or the majority—of us were wrong and citing half-a-dozen instances indicating that we were wrong.

Mr. Moynihan quotes correctly, but if I were writing that article today, thirty years later, I would not stop with half-a-dozen instances of supporting evidence. It would be nearer half a hundred. Yet perhaps I would abandon them all in favor of two criteria that history shows are the most reliable tests of the merit of any man who introduces a new style of political thinking. Disregarding extraneous matters (in which he was often wrong), the core of Wilson's political philosophy was that with military might alone you cannot make peace, you can only "make a desert and call it peace."

The criteria mentioned are (1) that in life the philosopher was derided, and (2) that, being fifty years dead, his ghost still walks.

In Wilson's case (1) is attested by the fact that we replaced him, as President, with Harding—the very acme of derision.

Then (2) is attested by the fact that fifty years after his death people like Daniel P. Moynihan and—more significantly—people who are his direct opposite, are still writing about Wilson.

The fact that some write to bless and others to curse his memory is immaterial. He haunts them all, and that happens in the case of no thinker who wasn't substantially right, whatever his errors in matters of detail.

GERALD W. JOHNSON
Baltimore, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel P. Moynihan's "Was Woodrow Wilson Right?" is one of the fairest, truest, and noblest evaluations of Wilson's impact on our century's developments that I have ever read. I was deeply moved by it.

ARTHUR S. LINK
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Daniel P. Moynihan has rendered a notable service to the American political tradition. For over fifty years Woodrow Wilson has been largely separated from his own people. Mr. Moynihan's essay makes an important contribution to the restoration of Wilson to us.

Mr. Moynihan brilliantly defines Wilson's impact. He "helped, first, to set in motion an extraordinary world dynamic of political independence accompanied by a rhetoric of personal freedom; and sought, secondly, to establish a world order which, by legitimating and channeling these forces, would sufficiently contain them." Since Mr. Moynihan gave his main attention to the first of these achievements, I hope I may be permitted to add a few comments on the second, based on a study of Wilson I am just bringing to completion.

As Mr. Moynihan stresses, Wilson saw a close connection between morality and politics. It is equally important to see the persistent emphasis Wilson gave to *organization*. Perhaps the best statement of this was in a speech in early 1912: ". . . Men who are behind any interest always unite in organization, and the danger in every country is that these special interests will be the only things organized, and that the common interest will be unorganized against them. *The business of government is to organize the common interest against the special interests*" (emphasis in original).

Concern with more effective organization was the controlling theme of Wilson's first book, *Congressional Government* (1885). The common interest could be served only if organized through effective party structures and meaningful public debate. A similar emphasis underlay Wilson's entire "New Freedom" program, and found expression in such major and durable organizational innovations as the Federal Reserve System. Wilson's arguments for

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While Project LIVE is one of the most personal and important ways Exxon is aiding education, it's still only one way—there are dozens of others. Including Exxon Education Foundation grants to colleges and universities. Bilingual schools for Chinese immigrants. Block schools for Spanish-speaking communities. Service station management training courses for minorities. In-class TV series for elementary school students. A program that sends black Exxon executives to black colleges as visiting professors. And many more.

As a group, Exxon-sponsored programs to aid education are helping students from grade school through grad school—and enabling some people to become students for the first time in their lives.

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more effective international organization in the last speeches of his career were the extension to the disorganized area of world politics of beliefs that had been at the foundation of his political philosophy for over a third of a century.

The failure of the League is, as Mr. Moynihan points out, one of the reasons Wilson has long been separated from his people. The most influential tradition in American foreign-policy thinking in the quarter century after World War II has been political "realism." Its chief proponents (Walter Lippmann, Hans Morgenthau, George F. Kennan) have laid heavy stress on the national interest and the balance of power, and have shared an antipathy to the "illusions" of Wilsonian "idealism."

Wilson's skepticism toward the balance-of-power system derived in part from philosophic preconceptions. To his mind it was an arrangement in which the special interests were organized at the expense of the common human interest in peace and justice. Beyond this, however, Wilson's frustrations derived from the recalcitrance of events. The central theme of his great "Peace without Victory" speech in January 1917 was that only a peace which rested on a balance between the great warring interests could be durable. The course of events, not the "idealism" of Woodrow Wilson, made this quest for a balanced settlement impossible.

Until 1917 World War I was a 19th-century war; after 1917 it was a 20th-century one, as Elie Halevy has argued. By 1917 the old world order was gone beyond recall; the world of Metternich and Bismarck was in ruins. None of Wilson's predecessors faced comparable dilemmas; none of his successors was to be free of them. If he is to be judged fairly, it must be by the standard of subsequent realities, not of prior expectations.

Faced with the catastrophic breakdown of 19th-century civilization, Wilson became the most important spokesman for the possibilities of a new order on a liberal basis. He embodied all the great values of the liberal tradition—its integrity, its unyielding commitment to human freedom under law, its dynamism, its faith in the possibilities of more cooperative behavior among states. That tradition itself remains crippled so long as its most influential statesman is dismissed as a "blind and deaf Don Quixote," to quote the merciless distortion of Keynes. With the crippling of liberal convictions, Americans are all the more subject to the pull of two alternatives: the "reactionary utopianism" (the phrase is Stanley Hoffmann's) of the "realists," and the violent romanticism of the revolutionaries.

In truth, however, the Wilsonian emphases were rooted in persistent and growing realities on both the domestic and the international scene, as Mr. Moynihan points out. It is perhaps in response to these realities that Secretary Kissinger so often speaks in Wilsonian tones (although he does not acknowledge the lineage). The recurrent emphases in all his major policy statements are those Wilson would well understand: the dangers of war for the future of civilization, and the imperative need for organized cooperative behavior among states.

Wilson was prophetic in his understanding of two great realities: the classic system of states could never be reconstructed after the revolutionary destruction of World War I; if any future world order were to have liberal dimensions, an active world role for America was essential. Wilson gave authentic expression to America's selfhood. When Americans separate themselves from Wilson they close a major avenue to the deeper understanding of themselves. We are indebted to Mr. Moynihan for helping us narrow that distance.

WHITTLE JOHNSTON
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Some time ago I wrote to thank Daniel P. Moynihan for redeeming the word "honorable" in his "Address to the Freshman Class" [December 1972]. Now he has the courage to use "liberty," "duty," and even "patriotism" in "Was Woodrow Wilson Right?" What a nice surprise to find such old friends rehabilitated.

BETH ROSENBAUM
Brookline, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his otherwise insightful article that exhibits his moral toughness, Daniel P. Moynihan writes: ". . . [Wilson] was willing to bend a principle for Lloyd George, but not for Robert A. Taft. . . ." In 1924, when Wilson died, Robert Taft was *only* thirty-five years old.

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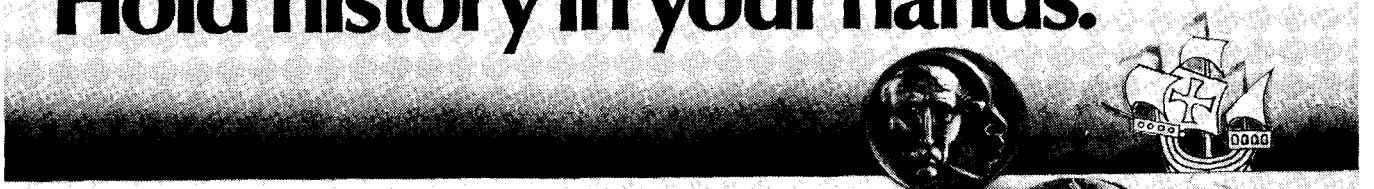

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Perhaps Mr. Moynihan meant to refer instead to William Howard Taft.

BARRY WEISMAN
Flushing, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The Celtic perversity of Daniel P. Moynihan grows increasingly intolerable. Even in far-off New Delhi he must be aware that the current intellectual fashion demands pessimism about the world, humankind, and the United States. He has surely heard of Robert Heilbroner and Richard N. Goodwin and all the other neo-Manichean prophets of doom. How, then, does he dare to write an article of such radiant hopefulness as his recent appreciation of Woodrow Wilson? Hope is outmoded; confidence is obsolescent; belief in freedom old-fashioned; and the notion that half of the Wilsonian program has already become a reality is simply intolerable.

The United States a beacon of freedom? Ambassador Moynihan begins to sound not only like Woodrow Wilson but even like Walt Whitman and Thomas Jefferson. As the country approaches its 200th anniversary, the last thing we need is patriots, especially hopeful patriots.

Maybe before the Ambassador returns to American academic life, the State Department will provide him with sustained briefing sessions to prepare him for culture shock. He must learn that the American intelligentsia already has passed through the portals of Dante's hell and accepted Loren Eiseley's judgment that the evolutionary process made a fatal mistake several million years ago when it produced humankind. At least, that's what they're saying on the Op Ed page of the New York *Times*, and if they're saying it there, it must be true.

Out on the prairie soil of Illinois, of course, we still like men who hope, but then the Ambassador won't be coming back to the prairie soil of Illinois.

ANDREW M. GREELEY
Center for the Study
of American Pluralism
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

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DANIEL P. MOYNIHAN writes:

Whittle Johnston's letter seems to me exceptionally important, and bears reading more than once by those of us who may have got into the habit of wondering whether international organizations are worth the pretense. Of course they are: if only because they may one day be what Woodrow Wilson felt they would one day *have* to be. I am grateful to him, and am fair to embarrassed by the generosity of Arthur S. Link. How shall I respond to Barry Weisman's good-natured correction? It were perhaps best simply to deny ever having written that sentence. I thank Gerald W. Johnson, Beth Rosenbaum, and Andrew M. Greeley for their generosity and insight.

Russian Realities

1. Solzhenitsyn

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jeri Laber's "The Real Solzhenitsyn" [May] raises issues of importance to the understanding of Solzhenitsyn and of our own literary, political, and moral judgments. . . . Now that Solzhenitsyn is physically safe, there appears to be a tendency to cut him down, following on the heels of a "celebrity" build-up that was equally trendy and superficial. . . .

I should like to take issue, to begin with, with the author's misreading of the passage, "The West on its Knees," in Solzhenitsyn's *Open Letter to the Soviet Leaders*. Solzhenitsyn describes the unbelievable successes of Soviet foreign policy, unhoped for by even "the most unbridled patriotic soothsayer," and beyond the wildest expectations of Czarist Russia. This is *not* a "chauvinistic dream for the Russia of the future," as Mrs. Laber maintains, but what Solzhenitsyn sees as the plain facts of the present. His argument is that enough is enough, that no further imperialist expansion and strengthening is necessary or desirable. He pleads with the leaders of his country for four things, all arising from this basic premise: to avoid war with China at all costs; to dissolve the European portion of the Russian empire by freeing the non-Russian peoples; to turn the nation's energies inward; to avoid some of the results of "progress" he sees in the West. Solzhe-

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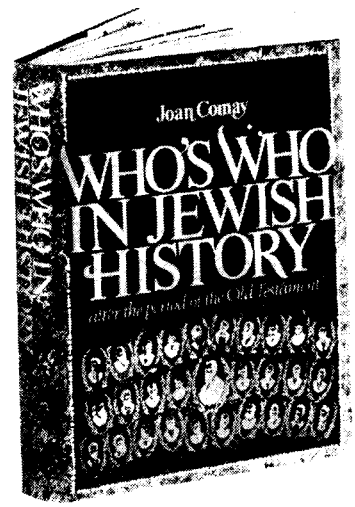

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nitsyn is, therefore, not equating patriotism with imperial power.

Two other aspects of this letter, however, do strike the Western reader as retrograde. The first is the appeal itself, asking those in power to divest themselves of a large part of it on their own initiative, and please to be reasonable and moral in planning their actions. We hear in it the echo of Schiller's famous *"Sir, geben Sie Gedankenfreiheit!"*—the illusion of some of the men of the Enlightenment that their influence could be joined to the power of monarchs to effect social change. In this respect, Solzhenitsyn may be the victim of that special combination of naiveté and *hubris* that intellectuals fall prey to everywhere, but, because of their special isolation, perhaps more often in Russia.

The second "backward" theme in the letter is Solzhenitsyn's prescription for a better Russia. His fear that a sudden breakdown of the present system might result in confusion and violence, possibly followed by a new dictatorship, is not so unreasonable. But his apparent belief that profound social changes could be controlled as precisely as an experiment in a laboratory does seem unrealistic. Well, it would be nice if history had advanced to the point where such considerations might become topical! In the meantime, Solzhenitsyn suggests a strangely unreal intermediate state, in which there would be just enough control from above, and just enough freedom of thought, art, religion below. This is a kind of utopia in which the complex and dynamic problems of society are settled once and for all, in perpetual equilibrium. It is a static condition of righteousness, almost the Kingdom of God on earth. For people who have had "progress" dinned into their ears for fifty years with such appalling results, such a yearning for moral purity, for a state of spiritual peace, is more than understandable.

A different response to the tragic history of Russia is nonetheless possible, and is exemplified by Sakharov. In this view, Russia must come out of her isolation, not because the West is morally superior, but because it is open and flexible. Only contact with the world can thaw out Russian society and begin a process of reorganization. Underlying this idea is a dynamic view of history, a premise of learning and striving, without guarantee of success. And it seems to me that beyond this difference in political outlook there are two different notions of human dignity: purity of conscience and spiritual certainty, on the one hand; the assumption of moral risk, responsibility, and never-ending effort, on the other. . . .

One further point should be made. Toward the end of her article, Mrs. Laber refers to the contradiction between Solzhenitsyn's being "outspoken" against tyranny (something of an understatement, one might say), yet advocating an authoritarian system. This is true. Solzhenitsyn was willing, not just in one dramatic confrontation but for all his adult life, to risk everything for a lonely fight against tyranny; and he spent all his energy on this fight as well. And yet he has his doubts about the consequences of freedom, in Russia and elsewhere. Is this mere muddleheadedness, due perhaps to the limitations imposed by Soviet life on even the most questioning spirit?

I should like to suggest that, even though Solzhenitsyn's answer, distinguishing between intellectual and political freedom, is unrealistic, the question he poses is serious. During the past fifty years, we have seen either totalitarian (or at least harshly authoritarian) regimes, or else wildly hedonistic free societies like Germany in the 20's or nearly all of Europe and the United States at present. In these latter, individuals and nations seem to become profoundly disoriented by the lack of limitations, material and moral. This dilemma of freedom, with the loss of autonomy where it is absent, and the loss of legitimate authority to provide direction and meaning looming as a danger when it is present, is a real and universal one. It is also the profoundest and most tragic theme in Solzhenitsyn's work.

HANNE WEILL HOLESOVSKY
Amherst, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jeri Laber's effort to identify and portray "The Real Solzhenitsyn" is admirable in its intention. But I believe it to be gravely mistaken in its content and to represent a series of misconceptions that may be current in various quarters for various reasons, not least because we have trained a generation of Soviet specialists who are strong on their understanding of the political side and weak on the side of culture, especially religion—weak, or indeed lacking in the basic knowledge required for any serious discussion of the problems at issue. What follows is not intended, therefore, to reflect on Mrs. Laber personally but to correct misunderstandings of Solzhenitsyn's thought and to call attention to the simple fact that we cannot understand a society permeated with religion for a thousand years unless we pay attention to the fundamentals and also the intricacies of the religion in question. . . .

Solzhenitsyn speaks as a Christian and as a prophet in a line that goes back to the Jews of the Old Testament. He is not a "mystic," so far as is known; some people, of course, use "mystical" as simply a synonym for "religious," and should study the distinction between the two. Any orthodox Christian believes in God's inscrutable wisdom, in the flawed nature of all mankind (not in good guys and bad guys), in the notion that ultimate freedom is to be found in the acceptance of Christ's victory over sin, death, and blind necessity of all kinds. If one does not accept the Christian message—and most do not nowadays among the educated—that does not justify the epithet "reactionary" for those who do. Christianity teaches the absolute value of the human being (not at all excluding the value of the human community). The prophets once had to risk everything to state their message, and the ancient martyrs were men and women who stood by their faith whatever the cost—though the church censured people who *sought* martyrdom as suicides.

Solzhenitsyn identifies himself with the heritage of his people, not with the oppressive state of the past—though he says, in a way not necessarily intrinsic to his thought, that Russia has been "authoritarian, let her be so." (Does anyone think that Russia in 1974 is ready for democracy? She is less ready for it now than she was in 1917, when for fifty years there had been limited experience in local self-government and for a very brief period participation of elected representatives in the national government.) Perhaps those of us who think Russia could again move in the direction of democracy might hope to discuss the question with Solzhenitsyn. If we do,

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we might have the grace to admit that Western democracy's lack of a "built-in ethical foundation" has led to a series of grave social problems which one cannot spend a day in America without observing directly or indirectly. Solzhenitsyn does not say "America is authoritarian, let her be so"; he says we have problems, and he contends that there is something very wrong with our politicians. When liberal Congressmen say that, we wail in breast-beating agreement; when Solzhenitsyn says it, he is a "reactionary." Solzhenitsyn looks back on Russia's cultural past with pride. Why shouldn't he? Why should not all peoples—not merely tiny groups who have suffered oppression (can anyone deny that the Russians have suffered oppression?)—be entitled to pride in their cultural heritage? The article does not mention that Solzhenitsyn urges Russia to liberate the minority peoples of the borderlands. When did a Russian "chauvinist" ever in history advocate such a thing? As any Christian must, he wishes for all peoples the right to pursue their own path without the forcible intrusion of the outsider. . . .

In our time Christian writers cannot expect a reception based on an understanding of their position. But let us try to refrain from . . . accusing Solzhenitsyn of political sins of which he may or may not be guilty but which in any case do not relate to his chief concern, which lies in the realm of religion and culture.

DONALD W. TREADGOLD
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Alexander Solzhenitsyn cannot be understood in Western terms. His soul is Russian, not Western. To put him on a "liberal-conservative" scale is like asking what Confucius or Averroes would feel about Watergate. . . .

Most of the brave "dissidents" in Russia are children of the West. Naturally we Americans recognize ourselves in them, not in the alien Solzhenitsyn. I suspect, though, that the future lies neither with us, nor with the semi-Western dissidents, nor with their semi-Western oppressors. Far better that we should acknowledge the marks of doom that Solzhenitsyn sees on our foreheads and wish him and his colleagues of the future well on a voyage into history where we of the late West cannot follow.

JOHN W. BOWLING
Troy, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jeri Laber writes usefully about the mystical, chauvinistic, and reactionary nature of Solzhenitsyn's political views, and I agree with most of what she says on this score. She is also entitled to her opinion of Solzhenitsyn's abilities as a writer, but in my judgment she is mostly wrong on that. Although it is increasingly fashionable to say that admiration for Solzhenitsyn's courage has blinded Western critics to his literary deficiencies, I think the reverse is more nearly true. Most commentators, obviously including Mrs. Laber, are so preoccupied with his political stance that they slight his work without seriously confronting it.

I hasten to say that I make no defense of *August 1914*, which is unarguably a tedious, self-conscious affair. One hopes that Solzhenitsyn will abandon the project or find another voice. (Mrs. Laber is manifestly correct in suggesting that *August 1914* is modeled on *War and Peace*, but it is more nearly related structurally and stylistically to Upton Sinclair's Lanny Budd series. Like the latter, it features a ubiquitous fictional character acting as the connecting figure in a narrative of historical events peopled by real persons. Solzhenitsyn's novel has the fatal weaknesses of the prototype—an implausibly brilliant fictional catalyst somehow vanished from the pages of history, dependence on absurdly coincidental encounters at crucial moments, and inability to breathe novelistic life into historical personages whom the novelist has drafted but cannot control. *War and Peace* focuses, in the main, on the effects of historical events on the lives of its fictional characters and the society about them, despite its famous passages embodying Tolstoy's theory of history. *August 1914*, in the main, is a commentary on history, with fictional episodes scattered through, like raisins to sweeten a pudding.)

But Solzhenitsyn should not be judged by *August 1914*, any more than Tolstoy should be judged by

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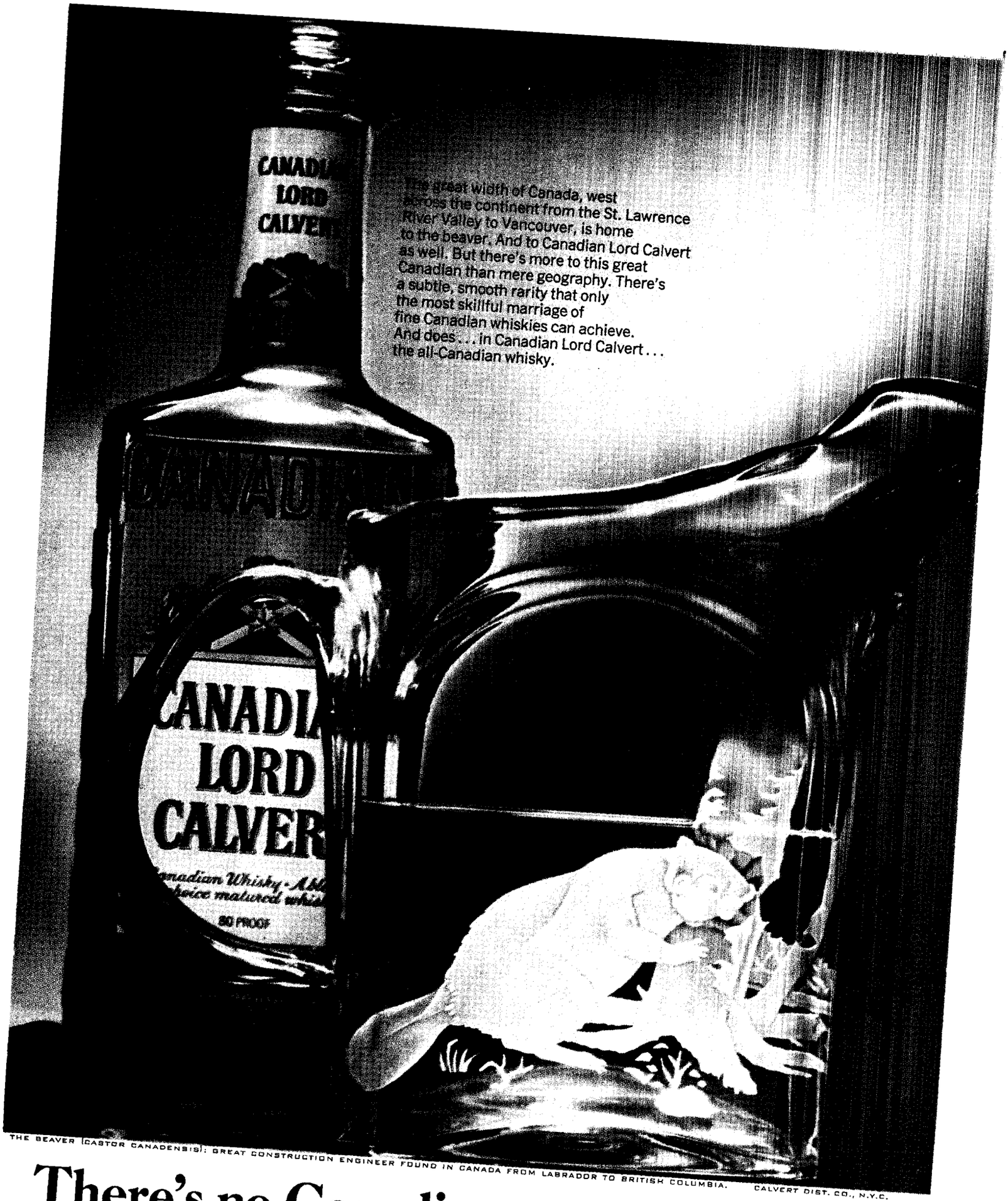
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the lame work he did when his own utopian visions assumed control of his talent. In contrast to Mrs. Laber, I regard *The First Circle* as a great novel, Tolstoyan in its sweep in spite of the thematic confines in which the story is played out. The Stalin episodes, among the finest in the book, suggest that, like Tolstoy with Kutuzov, Solzhenitsyn is far from helpless with real personages when they have an organic relationship to his fictional purpose. *Cancer Ward*, while flawed, is likewise the product of a superior novelistic talent. Both of these works, in my personal opinion, are more interesting than *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, even though the latter, as Mrs. Laber concedes, is a triumph of straightforward narrative (reminding me of *The Red Badge of Courage*).

The essential difficulty with Solzhenitsyn for contemporary readers is that he brings 19th-century novelistic conventions to the treatment of his themes and particularly so as he moves from simple narrative to panorama. His best works are all hopelessly "old-fashioned"—as old-fashioned in one sense as his political ideas are in another. But then if I can listen to Mozart and Beethoven (as well as Stravinsky and Webern), if I can read Tolstoy and Melville (as well as Eliot and Joyce), why should I or any other reader be troubled by resort to the techniques of another time as long as they are successfully employed?

To be sure, each to his own taste. But as for myself I can assure Mrs. Laber that it isn't merely Solzhenitsyn's courage that has impelled me to read his novels and to find them much superior to the works of the average Nobel laureate. Indeed, I believe that *The First Circle*, *Cancer Ward*, and *One Day* already insure him a place among the great artists of this century.

NORMAN I. GELMAN
Potomac, Maryland

JERI LABER writes:

My intention in writing "The Real Solzhenitsyn" was not, as Hanne Weill Holesovsky suggests, to "cut him down." It was rather to correct certain misconceptions about Solzhenitsyn that have been prevalent in the West for some time—among a number of Sovietologists, it now appears, as well as the general public. These misapprehensions were *not* created by Solzhenitsyn, who has expressed his views with integrity and consistency, but by the media and the Western liberal public which for many years insisted upon attributing to Solzhenitsyn the conventional—and in some ways much less interesting—beliefs of a pro-Western democrat. Why this image persisted, unquestioned, for so long is a complicated matter—one that I deal with at some length in another article, "The Selling of Solzhenitsyn" (*Columbia Journalism Review*, May 1974).

There were three major reasons why it seemed necessary to discuss the "real" Solzhenitsyn at this time: 1) in certain instances a faulty notion of Solzhenitsyn's views had, it seemed to me, prevented a proper understanding of his work; *August 1914*, in particular, was sometimes misunderstood by critics who incorrectly assumed that Vorotyntsev—the protagonist—was also the spokesman for Solzhenitsyn's views; 2) the failure of many in the West to distinguish between Solzhenitsyn's beliefs and those of other Soviet dissidents reflected a lack of awareness here of a heartening development in contemporary Soviet society—the genuine exchange of ideas that is now taking place among Soviet intellectuals; and 3) it became especially important, once Solzhenitsyn was exiled to the West, for people here to understand who he was in order to know how to deal with him; it was disquieting to hear U.S. Senators, for example, greeting Solzhenitsyn as a comrade and ally and inviting him to live among us, apparently unaware of his severe criticisms of Western democracy in general and the United States in particular.

How overwhelming it must have been for Solzhenitsyn, arriving in the West, to find that he, who once could do no wrong in Western eyes, could suddenly do no right. If he withdrew from publicity he was criticized for letting down his friends among the Soviet dissidents who were counting on him to publicize their cause. Yet if he spoke out he encouraged a "celebrity treatment" replete with the attendant antagonism illustrated by William Safire's tasteless "Alex Baby" column in the *Times* advising Solzhenitsyn on how to please his public. In the midst of these new and trying circumstances, however, Solzhenitsyn chose to release the text of his *Letter to the Soviet Leaders*, written some six months before. Perhaps he realized that no one knew what to make of him. Presumably he wanted his views to be known.

My article, in which I describe Solzhenitsyn's views and characterize them as "reactionary, authoritarian, and chauvinistic," has antagonized Miss Holesovsky, Donald W. Treadgold, and John W. Bowling. Rather than making me feel that I have gone too far, their letters lead me to believe that I have not gone far enough, not only in explaining *why* I have used these adjectives but in pointing out why I find the views that they characterize potentially dangerous.

First, let me discuss a few semantic problems with Mr. Treadgold, who has attributed a meaning to my words I in no way intended. I did not use "mysticism" as a synonym for Solzhenitsyn's religious beliefs, nor did I use it negatively. Mysticism implies reliance on spiritual intuition and a sense of direct communion with God. As Harrison Salisbury pointed out some time ago, Solzhenitsyn's "mystic sense of mission" is reflected in his belief that he has been "chosen" to suffer, to endure, and to serve his people, that "he had been endowed with a special purpose in life." When a Leningrad woman killed herself after relinquishing a copy of the *Gulag* manuscript to her interrogators, some saw in this the hand of the KGB; Solzhenitsyn saw "the hand of God."

Let me assure Mr. Treadgold that I do not consider religious belief in the 1970's "reactionary," nor do I think that anyone who criticizes the "grave social problems" of Western democracy (an understatement in these Watergate days) is a "reactionary." When I described Solzhenitsyn's statements as "authentically reactionary" I was thinking of the precise dictionary definition: "favoring a return to a previous state of affairs." I was referring to Solzhenitsyn's defense of those "retrogrades" who opposed progress and turned out, he believes, to be right, those "reactionary 'Slavophiles'" with whom he identifies because they "said it was perfectly feasible for a colossus like Russia, with all its spiritual peculiarities and folk traditions, to find its own particular path." I was thinking of Solzhenitsyn's wish to build "*new* towns of the *old* type," of his advocacy of a society based on the ethical precepts of early Orthodoxy and on the authoritarianism with which Russia lived "for a thousand years." These

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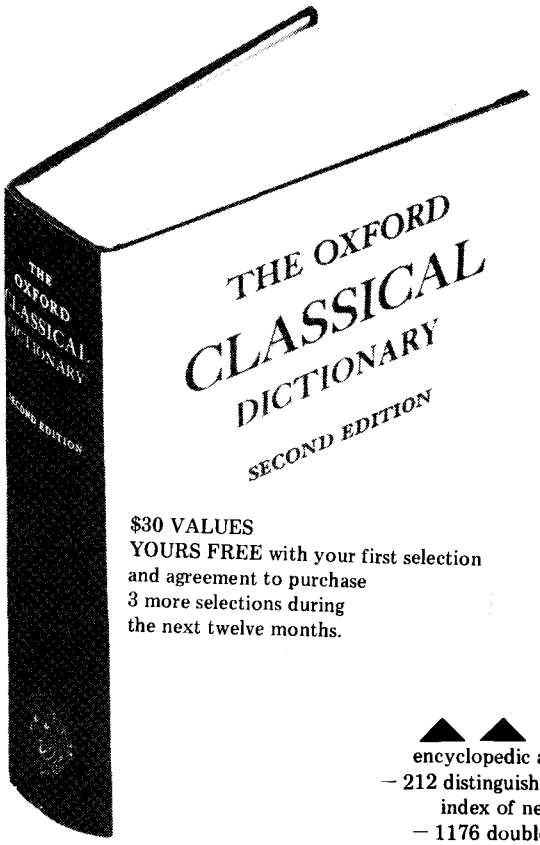

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seem to me the views of an authentic reactionary.

There is, of course, a negative connotation to the word "reactionary." Miss Holesovsky, I notice, cannot bring herself to use the word at all, referring to aspects of Solzhenitsyn's thought as "retrograde" and "backward" instead, hardly less pejorative. Though quick to point out that Solzhenitsyn is continuing the Slavophile tradition and is identifying himself with the spiritual and cultural heritage of his people, both Miss Holesovsky and Mr. Treadgold fail to see in his views a dangerous kind of thought that has as many roots in Russia's history as the religion which, Mr. Treadgold points out, has permeated Russian society "for a thousand years." My fears, I hasten to add, are shared by Andrei Sakharov, whose ability to understand Russian cultural history is more incontestable, one would hope, than that of the "culturally weak" generation of Soviet specialists to which Mr. Treadgold apparently has consigned me. On April 3, 1974 Sakharov said:

> These opinions are alien to me. I consider the democratic path of development the only possible one for any country. The servile, slavish spirit which existed in Russia for centuries, combined with a scorn for people of other countries, other races, and other beliefs, was in my view the greatest of misfortunes. Only under democratic conditions can one develop a national character capable of intelligent existence in a world becoming increasingly complex.

I stand corrected by Miss Holesovsky about my misreading of the passage "The West on its Knees" as Solzhenitsyn's "chauvinistic dream for the Russia of the future." I think she is right that Solzhenitsyn, in describing Russia as a "superpower before which the entire world trembles" and the West as "weak and effete and torn by internal dissension," is portraying what he sees as the "facts of the present." This only makes his description seem more inaccurate and incredible, however. I fail to see the entire world trembling before Russia's might. And is not Solzhenitsyn himself the great symbol of a Russia increasingly "torn by internal dissension"?

Both Mr. Treadgold and Miss Holesovsky take exception to my use of the word "chauvinistic." When, Mr. Treadgold asks, did a Russian "chauvinist" ever in history advocate the liberation of minority people? He declares that Solzhenitsyn has expressed the "Christian" desire to allow "all peoples the right to pursue their own path without the forcible intrusion of the outsider." Solzhenitsyn's *Letter,* however, conveys a very different impression. He is concerned *not* with self-determination for the Soviet minorities but with the fate of the *Russian people,* a self-confessed "preoccupation" based on "the incomparable sufferings of our people" and ignoring the fact that the non-Russian minorities have suffered as much, if not more, under Soviet power. Solzhenitsyn himself admits to advocating "a policy of saving only ourselves" in a passage which hardly reflects his Christian spirit:

> I would not consider it moral to recommend a policy of saving only ourselves, when the difficulties are universal, had our people not suffered more in the 20th century, as I believe they have, than any other people in the world.

Miss Holesovsky points out correctly that Solzhenitsyn opposes the imperialist expansionism usually associated with "chauvinism." His proposals are nationalist and isolationist, instead. Yet, as Sakharov states, the appeal to patriotism is "straight out of the arsenal of semi-official propaganda. It automatically invites comparison with the notorious military-patriotic indoctrination and the campaign against 'toadying to foreigners' of the recent past." And although Sakharov acknowledges that Solzhenitsyn's nationalism is not aggressive, he declares:

> Among much of the Russian people and many of the nation's leaders there exist sentiments of Great Russian nationalism combined with a fear of becoming dependent on the West, and a fear of democratic reforms. Falling on such fertile soil, Solzhenitsyn's mistakes may become dangerous.

It is not that Solzhenitsyn believes merely that Russia is not ready for democracy; he is skeptical about democracy itself. So, it appears from their letters, are Mr. Treadgold, Miss Holesovsky, and Mr. Bowling. Here, perhaps, lies our greatest disagreement.

SINCE Norman I. Gelman is the only correspondent who agrees with me about something, and since our area of disagreement involves Solzhenitsyn's competence as a writer rather than his political views, I will answer him separately.

Like Mr. Gelman, I have no objection to Solzhenitsyn's use of 19th-century novelistic conventions "so long as they are successfully employed." I pointed out that Solzhenitsyn's successful moments "recall the best of 19th-century Russian realism." I don't understood, however, why Mr. Gelman concludes that the contemporary reader's essential difficulty with Solzhenitsyn should be attributed to the use of "techniques of another time." If anything, the artful use of such familiar techniques should make his work more accessible than that of less conventional "modernists."

I also agree largely with Mr. Gelman's praise for *The First Circle,* a book which I described (*New Republic,* October 19, 1968) as "a distinguished work, thoroughly contemporary, authentically Russian . . . profound in its vision and its implications." *August 1914* is, however, a very different matter, as Mr. Gelman is quick to admit. We differ only in that he tends to dismiss that novel as an aberration in Solzhenitsyn's work, whereas I have tended to see in Solzhenitsyn's life and work a steady progression toward didacticism, culminating, at least for the moment, in *August 1914.* I have based my assumption on Solzhenitsyn's own statements that *August 1914* is part of "the chief design of [his] life" and the fact that he is now engaged in completing that work. Perhaps my assumption is unfair. Solzhenitsyn's life has changed abruptly and radically, and there is no reason why his work may not also. *September 1916* may be very different and far superior to *August 1914,* and, if so, I will certainly welcome it.

2. The Jews

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

William Korey ["Quotas and Soviet Jewry," May] writes that in Russia a system of quotas linked to the proportion of a given ethnic group in the population has governed admission to universities and "this has operated to the particular disadvantage of the Jewish population."

In his book *Russia Re-examined,* William M. Mandel notes that "although Jews constitute only 1.1 per cent of the Soviet pop-

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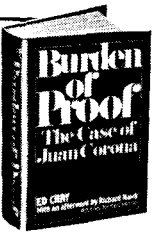

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ulation, they number 8.5 per cent of the professional writers and newspapermen, 10 per cent of the college professors, 33.3 per cent of the personnel of the film industry, 10.4 per cent of the judges and lawyers, 15.7 per cent of the doctors, and 7 per cent of the musicians, painters, sculptors, and actors. The percentage of Jewish college undergraduates is three times as high as the ratio of Jews in the Soviet population."

Out of 844 persons who have received the Soviet Union's highest award, the Lenin Prize, 11.4 per cent (96) were Jews. There are more than 8,000 Jewish deputies in the Supreme and local Soviets.

In the circumstances, isn't it possible that Mr. Korey has given us a bit of myth-information?

NORMAN F. DACEY
Southbury, Connecticut

WILLIAM KOREY writes:

The quotation in my article concerning the manner in which Soviet university admission quotas have disadvantaged Jews is from the massive and authoritative work on Soviet education, *Education and Professional Employment in the USSR*, written by Nicholas DeWitt and published by the National Science Foundation. Recent data showing the heavy drop in Jewish enrollment in Soviet universities are to be found in an official Soviet government source—*Narodnoe khoziaistvo, 1922-72* (National Economy, 1922-72). The method and sharp impact of the quota system are elaborated upon by the Soviet historian and dissenter, Roy Medvedev, in his 1970 *samizdat* document, *Blizhnevostochnyi konfikt i yevreiskii vopros v SSR* (The Near Eastern Conflict and the Jewish Question in the USSR).

A perusal of these documents or a reading of current standard works on the subject might conceivably puncture some self-imposed myths. As for the statistics in the book of William Mandel, they are very much out of date (the book was published in 1964) and not too relevant to the subject.

The reference to some 8,000 Jewish deputies in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Supreme Soviets of the union-republics, and local Soviets is curious. Mandel's book carries no mention of this figure. But the statistic has been trumpeted abroad by Novosti, the Soviet news agency. In fact, the use made of this figure is notoriously misleading. Of 1,517 deputies in the 1966 Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 5 were Jewish; of 5,312 deputies elected to union-republic Supreme Soviets (in 1959), a total of 14 were Jewish. The percentage of Jews in the Supreme Soviets, whether on an all-union or union-republic level, is far below their percentage in the population as a whole. The figure of 8,000 refers mainly to Jewish deputies in local Soviets. But the total number of deputies in these local organs—Novosti neglects to mention. It is some two million. Thus the percentage of Jews in them, as in the Soviet political structure generally, is glaringly inconsequential.

3. Democracy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Stalin Under Western Eyes" [April] Lev Navrozov briefly discusses my book *Stalin As Revolutionary: A Study in History and Personality*. Mr. Navrozov writes that I have "a vision of pre-1917 Russia as a land of unrelieved autocratic darkness: [Tucker] cites on the very first page of his book the official document of 1892 declaring Russia an autocracy. The existence of the jury trial; the fact that freedom of the press was practically unlimited as of 1912, and extended even to the Bolshevik newspaper *Pravda*; the existence of thousands of independent organizations, including political parties, trade unions, and national-minority groups, not to mention the Duma (parliament) in which, despite a severely restricted franchise, all political opinions were expressed and officially published—about all this the document of 1892 which Mr. Tucker cites says nothing, *and so all this he ignores*" (emphasis added).

I cannot understand why Mr. Navrozov conceals from readers of the article the fact that my book goes on to say on its third page: "Earlier, Czar Alexander II had sponsored a series of socio-political reforms beginning with the Act of 1861, which abolished serfdom. Although these reforms of the 1860's brought about the beginnings of local self-government through the *zemstvo*, or local assembly, the autocratic apex of the Russian political structure was left intact. . . . It took the Revolution of 1905 to extract constitutional innovations from a reluctant Czarist authority. Political parties were legalized, and a mainly elective national parliamentary assembly, the State Duma, came into being."

ROBERT C. TUCKER
Princeton, New Jersey

LEV NAVROZOV writes:

I am glad that Robert C. Tucker does not deny the reality of the civic evolution of Russia before 1917, as outlined in the passage he quotes from my article. His objection is merely that I concealed his own presentation of this evolution, and to prove this, Mr. Tucker quotes a paragraph from his book. Unfortunately, Mr. Tucker drops the conclusion of his paragraph and makes a ten-line ellipsis in the middle. Thus truncated, the quotation ends quite cheerfully: ". . . the State Duma, came into being." Actually, the sequel, which Mr. Tucker omits here, extinguishes this sole glimmer of light in his outline of Russian history before 1917, and we are back in unrelieved autocratic darkness as we learn that Nicholas II still wanted to "act the part of the 'unlimited monarch' that the Fundamental Laws had declared the autocratic Emperor of All the Russians to be." Similarly, the ten lines that Mr. Tucker skips in the middle of his quotation contain more of the same kind of despondency.

When I say that in his book Mr. Tucker *ignores* the civic evolution of Russia before 1917 I do not mean that he never once *mentions* the Duma or political parties. I know of no outline of Russian history, Western or Soviet, which does not. The point, however, is not the existence of an isolated passage mentioning them, but the whole tenor and concept of the book. If Mr. Tucker had *not* ignored the civic evolution of Russia before 1917, then he would have had to admit that Lenin and his subordinates (such as Stalin) had always intended to smash, and did smash, all the results of this evolution in their reactionary and regressive coup d'état. But how would this accord with Mr. Tucker's chapter, "Lenin as Revolutionary Hero," or indeed with the concept of his whole book, aptly titled *Stalin as Revolutionary?*

Even a randomly sampled sentence, such as the sentence from the truncated passage Mr. Tucker quotes, shows how this concept or creed of heroic revolutionism clashes with the reality of the civic evolution of Russia before 1917. The sentence states that what Mr.

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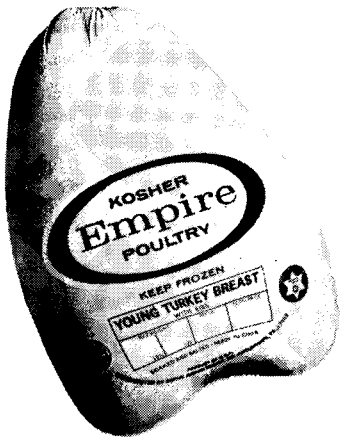

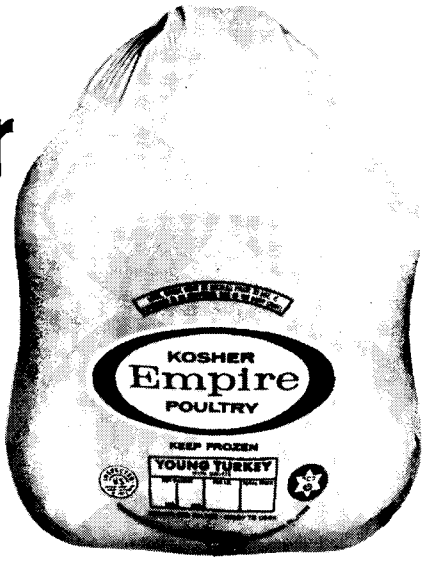

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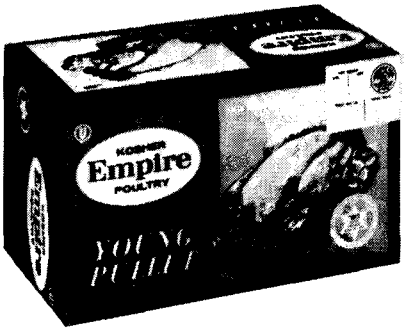

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Tucker calls the "Revolution of 1905" (needless to say, such names are usually creedal symbols rather than historical realities) "extracted" certain freedoms (which prove to be in Mr. Tucker's next sentence rather futile) from "reluctant Czarist authorities." If, before repeating such "heroic" clichés of Soviet propaganda, Mr. Tucker had used a fraction of that superb scholarship which he aplies to some purely biographical episodes, he would have readily found that the population of Russia received an unprecedented series of freedoms immediately *before* the "Revolution of 1905," and that there was an inevitable abrogation of many freedoms directly *after* it.

Thus the reality of the civic development of Russia and of the existence of full-fledged Russian democracy in 1917, which "revolutionary heroes" like Lenin or Stalin razed to the ground, makes havoc of the creed of heroic revolutionism, and this reality is therefore often ignored, even though some relevant facts are inevitably mentioned.

Oil

To the Editor of Commentary:

Edward N. Luttwak's article, "Farewell to Oil?" [May] is generally very well done and rather succinctly explains the economics of certain long-term aspects of the energy situation. One must wonder, however, at Sheik Yamani's inability to reduce oil prices. It is difficult to believe that Saudi Arabia (OPEC's largest producer) finds its hands tied by opposition from such nations as Ecuador and Qatar. The situation is somewat analogous to the United States' pleading inability to take a course vital to its national interests as it conceives them due to opposition from NATO members Belgium and Italy—or even the entire NATO alliance. Would that it were so and Vietnam merely a bad dream. The French have been falling all over themselves trying to line up long-term oil deals. It seems unlikely that France (or Japan or West Germany) could pass up a 25-year oil deal at $5 a barrel with a clause adjusting the price for the effects of inflation.

While it may give some comfort to Americans suffering through an energy crisis to read that the Arabs will in time "get theirs," this is not necessarily the case. Mr. Luttwak clearly explains the inability of the West to reduce substantially its dependence on imported oil in the next few years. What he does not explain are the effects of the huge bill for imported oil on the payments balances and economies of the West. With the exception of the Germans (who produce for the export market first, the domestic market second) and the Canadians (who basically are self-sufficient in energy), no Westerners have much likelihood of selling enough to their trading partners to prevent substantial payments deficits. To the West the result will probably be nation after nation traveling the road of inflation (note the current interest in gold), persistent currency devaluations, reductions in living standards, recessions (if not worse), and unemployment.

To the Arab states (except Iraq and Algeria) the result will be an embarrassment of riches such as the world has never known. The numbers truly boggle the mind. From $5 billion in 1970 (World Bank estimate) a recent Chase Manhattan study indicates that Arab reserves could well exceed the staggering sum of $300 billion by the end of this decade. It appears that Arab reserves will swell by $50 billion in 1974 with the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, and France alone running up payments deficits this year of well over $25 billion (OECD estimate).

These are sums that most of the Arab states cannot hope to spend. Indeed, their problem is how to save such fantastic amounts. One option open to them (if they are willing to risk the nationalization game they know so well) is investment in the West. Though real estate seems more to the Arab taste, all of the outstanding shares of the ten largest American industrial corporations (ranked by sales) are currently valued on the market at just over $100 billion. Dividends from such investments could make life along the upper Amazon (or the Arabian peninsula) quite tolerable.

This must bring into question Mr. Luttwak's conclusion that Westerners "lack the political will to act even to protect their own economic survival." Currently this is true, but currently Westerners generally do not realize that their economic survival hinges on a lower price for oil. Governments have a habit of changing. A mere rash of inflation has contributed to the fall in the last few months of governments in the United Kingdom, France, and West Germany. One would do well to remember that when the Weimar republic exhibited its inability to bring order out of economic chaos it was replaced with a new regime which promised to do just that—no matter how extraordinary the means that might be required.

Henry B. Cohen
Baltimore, Maryland

Edward N. Luttwak writes:

Amen.

American Catholics

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Michael Novak, in his review of Michael Harrington's *Fragments of a Century* [Books in Review, May], refers to the fear of the autobiographical mode as "an American-Catholic affliction," seeming not to recognize that the essays in Daniel Callahan's book to which he refers are almost exclusively by Irish- and German-Catholics, mostly Jesuit-educated, of the same class, and, in essential response, very much of a kind. Later, he makes apparent Harrington's ethnic and class and educational background, again, of a distinct kind: Irish, upper-middle class, and Jesuit-trained. These two positions simply will not stand together: the seeming equation of American-Catholic with a specific class, educational, and ethnic grouping.

My background is Catholic; I am Polish, and I avoided Jesuits as if they were an especially dangerous form of disease. . . . May I point out too that Michael Novak is of Catholic background and Slovak . . ., and as distinctly unlike Harrington as I am; how then can the fear of autobiography be, to any determinable extent, "American-Catholic"? I know that if you ask the Irish and Germans of "that" class about Catholicism, it always comes out looking Irish, mostly, and a little (not much, actually) German, soaked in Jesuitisms, and particularly odious to me. Again, since Novak is certainly not of this bunch, why is he unaware of the impropriety of this troublesome equation?

As I reject the equation, I also begin to see where just being Catholic in America, in an Irish-dominated Church, might give trouble to any number of Catholics who might think about approaching the autobiographical mode. I even sensed it in Mr. Novak's *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics*. . . .

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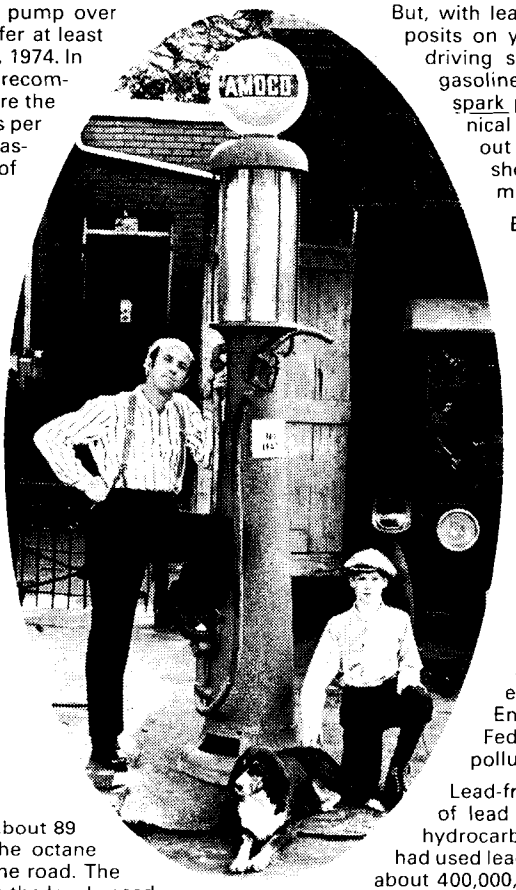

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. . . It seems to me that Poles, Italians, Greeks, and other Slavic and ethnic Catholics just *might* . . . un-Irishize Catholicism in America, and if nothing else, free *me* from that painful sight of the T-shirted, young Irish priest, all smiles and gymshoes, the whistle hanging menacingly from his neck, calling fouls to unwary kids playing basketball. Or maybe, if I can indulge my fantasies, I might see *Going My Way* not done in Irish brogue. . . .

MITCHELL WOJTYCKI
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . We are all "ethnics" of one variety or another, rooted in particular experiences that influence everything from the way we write to the way we eat. Michael Novak reminds us of this. . . . But this reminder . . . amounts to presuming to tell us who a person *really* is, what he or she is *really* saying. . . . If, for Michael Harrington, socialism " 'is problematic, even difficult to imagine,' " just as is the "Vision of God," does that amount to a *reduction* of the Marxist/Pascalist "socialist" imagination to Irish Catholicism; or is Harrington painfully expanding an earlier vision and discovering in it a wider and transcendent imperative? Mr. Novak writes that "it often happens that those who pass over from one world to another do not so much change themselves as appropriate materials to their own purposes." *Tu quoque.* I get the feeling when I read Mr. Novak that he is, however kindly and politely, rubbing our ethnicity, or our "lack" of it, in our faces . . . exposing us . . ., disclosing with disarming compassion what he finds us to be. . . . He would superimpose on us a finitude that restricts and constricts what we could become because he already knows exactly what we are. . . . If Harrington can be faulted for failing "to grasp the limits of his own imagination, Irish-Catholic to the core . . .," then Mr. Novak might be faulted for the same thing, with a change of ethnic label. This objection comes from one who has argued for "the diversity of human stories." Quite a trick of cultural relativism: we are to accept Mr. Novak's story and reject Harrington's.

In *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics,* Mr. Novak suggested that while Jews are more concerned with making a better *world,* Catholics are more concerned with making a better *life.* Harrington would seem then to be both Jewish and Catholic. But Irish Catholicism no more fully explains Michael Harrington's socialism than Jewishness explains Kafka's literary genius. . . . How was it possible that Harrington's *The Other America* fired the imagination and moral energy (and self-righteous moralism) of so many non-Irish Catholics and became the "manifesto" for the War on Poverty? As for the failure, does Harrington really "fudge" the true point by saying that we did too little, not too much? What we did was done, in fact, only half-heartedly, without full commitment to the ideal envisaged, and often in bad faith. Behind the scenes, unknown to those "in the field," the venture was condemned from the outset, hence the rage of those idealists who became inflamed when disillusioned. Harrington's despair (or shall we reduce it to Irish stupor?), and his almost hallucinatory hope . . . may not be a fault of his vision or plan, but of the travesty that was made of it. Harrington's socialism is an Augustinian City of God. Mr. Novak's alternative is the truncation of this imagination; his realism is a myopic narrowing of vision. Against the mythos of the "New Class," Mr. Novak has advanced the ideology of a fossilized and idealized world of ethnic "urban villagers" (the title of Herbert Gans's well-known study). Behind the extravagant paternalism he shows to Harrington, Mr. Novak has apparently failed to grasp the limits of his own imagination. It seems to me that part of a long-term solution to such clashes of ideology is that we must look for answers to our problems both within ethnicity and beyond it. . . .

HOWARD F. STEIN
Meharry Medical College
Nashville, Tennessee

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Michael Novak opens his review by mentioning a fear of autobiography and preference for the abstract that Daniel Callahan noted among some "young Catholic leaders" in 1965. That opening sounded what seemed to me to be the most important theme of Mr. Novak's review—how Michael Harrington struggles against this affliction in trying to articulate a personal vision fused to a social vision "in singleness of heart."

Perhaps the strongest evidence that the fear of autobiography is still present among American-Catholic thinkers is that Mr. Novak avoids mentioning himself as one of those leaders with that fear. As recently as this March, Wilfred Sheed mentioned some examples of "Catholics shrinking from personal witness even where their witness is part of the necessary data," and he specifically mentioned Mr. Novak's *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics.* . . .

It seems to me that Mr. Novak's failure to write from an autobiographical standpoint even while desiring to deal with his past and his identity has led him to write about individuals mainly as products of their environment. And in so doing, I think he overlooks the personal power one can have over one's life. Harrington's imagination is Irish-Catholic: "His apologetics for socialism are almost identical to the Jesuit apologetics he learned in his earlier years." But although Harrington may be using the intellectual tools he acquired in a particular background, he uses them in a different way. . . .

JOHN LAFFERTY
Lake Charles, Louisiana

MICHAEL NOVAK writes:

To Mitchell Wojtycki: May the number—and quality—of autobiographies, short stories, novels, plays, and films by Slavic, Italian, and other Catholics soon increase.

To Howard F. Stein: The stories of others can and do take us beyond our own story, show us new possibilities we ourselves hadn't thought of. Hearing one another's stories *is* a way of enlarging the common culture. The wedding in Michael Harrington of Irish-Catholic and Jewish themes is one model of what we all do: learn from each other. But just as there is self-hatred among Jews, so there is self-hatred among Catholics: one sees signs of it in Harrington, Wilfred Sheed, Garry Wills, Daniel Berrigan, myself, and others; Mr. Wojtycki's letter touches on it.

To John Lafferty: On the evidence of his latest book Michael Harrington does not appreciate the full personal power of his imagination; he undersells the persistence of the Irish-Catholic part of it. Michael Harrington is not a "product" of his environment; we are each freer than that. He is explicitly struggling for clearer connections between his present and his past. Mr. Lafferty's desire for writing "from an autobiographical

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standpoint" would be amply sated by my books. It ought to be his punishment to be obliged to read them all.

Anti-Semitism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Whoever may find enlightenment in Earl Raab's article, "Is There a New Anti-Semitism?" [May], it will not be the citizen who feels himself dispassionately and reasonably opposed to Israel and Zionism. Obviously, this citizen does not perceive himself as an anti-Semite. If others see him as such, he deserves an explanation easier to follow than Mr. Raab's elaborate and subtle theoretical weavings.

The issue, it seems to me, should not have been so difficult to state—and particularly not in an issue which includes Daniel P. Moynihan's article, "Was Woodrow Wilson Right?," which contains the observation that "the Wilsonian world view is already half achieved. Most peoples of the world live in independent states demarcated along lines of hoped-for ethnic legitimacy . . . the principle of self-determination has not only succeeded at the level of a norm but has also largely been implemented."

It is precisely here that we find the Jewish perception of prejudice and discrimination. In a world which has become passionately and obsessively devoted to the cause of self-determination for all peoples, the Jews can still be excluded, their right to self-determination still at issue. There are people for whom national liberation everywhere is a holy crusade who dare nonetheless to single out Zionism—*Jewish* national liberation—as alone and uniquely indefensible.

The Arabs claim that the right of self-determination in the entire Middle East is their right alone. But this denies the rights of another indigenous population. The Jews have a historical presence in the Middle East as old as the Arab one, and many of their communities in Asia and North Africa (before they were driven from them) were older than the Arabs' by many centuries. Jews have had a continuous presence in Palestine throughout centuries of Arab oppression. In spite of frequent destruction of their communities as well as of Arab lawlessness and neglect which eroded the land and impoverished the country, the Jews never relinquished their claim to their homeland. And today a majority of Jewish Israelis are themselves recent refugees from Arab and Moslem countries.

Yet for the Arabs—who are at the same time constantly claiming to be brothers and one nation—it is not enough that they are now separately independent in more than a dozen huge and stupefyingly rich and underpopulated countries. They must also crush the independence of the one small and poor nation of the Jews, the one place in the world which is morally, historically, religiously, culturally, and now—after more than a century of irrigation of the desert and draining of the swamps and redemption of the land—physically theirs.

What the Arabs really demand is that Jews in the Middle East be made once again, as they were in the past, a subservient, inferior, and "protected" minority. . . .

It is all too easy, therefore, to hear in the facile invocation of the words "self-determination for Pal-

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estinians" the coded corollary: "but not—not anywhere—for Jews." Thus are the history and identity and national rights of Israel and the Jews seen to be denied, and this at a time when nationalism is all but a religion for everybody else in the world.

It is the invidious discrimination and injustice of such thinking that are perceived as anti-Semitism.

ROSE G. LEWIS
Pelham, New York

Science and Art

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

John P. Sisk's "The Fear of Affluence" [June] . . . is staggering in its sweep over historical cases—ranging from medieval anchorites through our founding Pilgrims (both the ascetic and the dissolute ones) to Timothy Leary and Janis Joplin. And it is equally staggering in its incessant doctrinal references—drawing on Freudian, Reichean, Romanticist, Anarchist, and other theories for explanations of its cases. Yet nothing much emerges as a finding or conclusion regarding the role of affluence in America. . . . The reason for such a disappointing outcome—in this as in many other social essays by "intellectuals"—may lie in the anomaly that the subject is sociological while the treatment is essentially literary: while the subject calls for a social-science analysis, it gets from Mr. Sisk mainly illustrations, analogies, and assumptions.

His article is written around a notion which may have once been a real insight, namely the possibility that many Americans have a puritanical fear of affluence—as a form of indulgence that weakens the character, diminishes the drive to achievement, and may thus amount to "sin." Stated so baldly, this notion appears to be not very original with Mr. Sisk (*pace* Gibbon on the ancient Romans, Spengler on the West, Schumpeter on the capitalist entrepreneurs, Thomas Mann on Germans. . . .). But Mr. Sisk might still have had a subject if he had presented this notion for detailed application to Americans today.

However, in that event he would have been obliged to test the hypothesis against evidence, such as the behavior of various groups at different levels of affluence at any time, or the behavior of any given group evolving over time. He might even have been obliged to measure the pervasiveness of the alleged "fear," and to assess its weight in various connections. At the least we might expect Mr. Sisk to define "affluence"—rather than merely to use it as a polar extreme to "poverty," while admitting no intermediate degrees. He might then not have been able so easily to boost the Plains Indians from poverty to affluence once the Spaniards introduced the horse; and he might not so easily have attributed the wastage of resources (such as the slaughter of the bison on our Great Plains) to a supposition of endless affluent resources—rather than to an equally plausible postulate of headlong competition to get one's share of an evidently shrinking resource. We might also expect Mr. Sisk to define "adversity," or to distinguish the kind of hardship which disciplines men, and sometimes ennobles them, from the kinds of hardships which are known only to make life "nasty, brutish and short."

Indeed, Mr. Sisk's approach is quite representative of the special class which denominates itself as "the intellectuals"—thereby usually referring to literary persons writing about social and moral questions, and writing about them in an image-building or illustrative way. . . . The style, the spectacle, the verbal impact are mainly what such intellectuals are seeking—not a test of hypotheses against objective experience and real constraints. Much the same is true of a lot of current apocalyptic writing about "the limits to growth." . . . What is revealed in such socio-literary essays is ultimately a fear of evidence, along with an affluence of rhetoric.

EDWIN P. REUBENS
Department of Economics
City College of New York
New York City

JOHN P. SISK writes:

I am aware that in responding to Edwin P. Reubens's letter I am responding to an ancient complaint, directed on this occasion not so much against me as against those writers, many of whom appear in this publication, who write social criticism from an operational base in the humanities. For better or worse, I have been doing this for a quarter of a century, and so have encountered the complaint many times. Generally, it takes the form that Mr. Reubens has given it: calling my attention to the "anomaly that the subject is sociological while the treatment is essentially

R/69 Let me sing of my beloved (Isaiah 5:11)
R/82 Let the Law pierce the mountain (Yivamot)
R/79 More Counsel, More understanding (Avot 2:7)
R/72 Be healthy in spirit and body!
R/77 Aide to the fallen, Healer of the ill.
R/71 Blessed are the observers of justice (Prov)

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literary." So I must once again ask: Why is it better, or more relevant, or more valid to write of social and moral questions in "a scientific and demonstrative way" than in "an image-building and illustrative way"? Why are not the "ways" simply the consequence of different perspectives, each potentially as valid as the other and each potentially capable of reinforcing or complementing the other? Does Mr. Reubens think that it is possible to read literature, especially American literature, without being aware of the relevance to it of psychological, sociological, and economic perspectives? I suspect that he, along with so many other complainers I have encountered, has not been able to shake the notion that literature exists in an enclave apart from the world in which the social sciences happen, so that if one wishes to venture out of it across the two-culture gap he had better disguise himself as someone who belongs on the other side.

As for the more specific complaints. Surely it is as safe for me to assume that COMMENTARY readers will understand interrelated relative terms like "affluence," "poverty," and "adversity" as it is for Mr. Reubens to assume that I will understand him when, without defining his term, he classes me with the "intellectuals." I should think that the tone of my essay makes it clear that I do not believe affluence and poverty to be extremes that admit of no intermediate degrees, though the gradations between the extremes are not my subject. I do not think of what I wrote about the American's "puritanical fear of affluence" as the presentation of an original insight, but as an effort to present what is a matter of public record in the widest possible context. But then, what insight would seem original once it was "baldly" stated? Mr. Reubens is quite right in distinguishing between the adversity that ennobles man and that which brutalizes him. I believe, as I think he does, that the champions of the school of adversity have too often ignored the distinction, whether out of ignorance or selfishness. But again, I believe that the tone of my treatment makes it clear that I do not take the rhetoric of the school of adversity at face value any more than I take the rhetoric of the school of passional experience at face value. See, for instance, my treatment of Andrew Carnegie throughout and my treatment of the romance of adversity. I must believe that Mr. Reubens—bothered as he is by the absence in my essay of hypotheses that can be tested against "objective experience and real constraints," by my "fear of evidence," and by my apocalyptic pessimism—is really accusing me of not writing the sort of essay I had no intention to write, but which both of us would be quite happy to read if someone did write it.

I should take this occasion to correct an oversight. The title of Francis Haines's book, from which I quoted extensively in the last section of my essay, is *The Buffalo*.

The Definition of Palestine

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

My attention has been directed to an important mistake in my article, "America, Europe, and the Middle East" [February]. Reviewing the history of the Palestine Mandate, I repeated a common error in saying that Transjordan was "separated from the Mandate administration in 1922." This is not the case. The fact is critical in answering the questions, "What is Palestine?" and "Who are the Palestinians?," which have become crucial issues in the quest for peace in the Middle East.

The word "Palestine," of Roman origin, has for centuries been used in vague and ambiguous ways. The word itself refers to the Philistines. Until the Mandate, it never had a clear geographical definition. In the 19th century, Russian claims to or in "Palestine" were among the causes of the Crimean War.

The diplomacy of peacemaking for the Middle East must start with the definition of Palestine contained in the Mandate. There is no other. The Mandate included what are now Israel and Jordan, together with the areas in dispute between them: the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

From the beginning, it was always British policy, and the policy reflected in the correspondence between Weizmann and Feisal, that a Jewish state and an Arab state should emerge within the territory of Palestine. What is now known as Jordan would be the Palestinian Arab state, and Israel the Palestinian Jewish state. From the point of view of international law, Turkish sovereignty for these territories would pass to the new states via the Mandate.

This policy is reflected in the persistent pattern of usage and of international decision since the Mandate was instituted. All that happened in 1922 was that the Jewish-homeland provisions of the Mandate were declared inapplicable in what League of Nations documents describe as "the transjordan province of Palestine." Many aspects of government in Transjordan continued to be conducted by the British as the Mandatory power. Citizens of the area carried Palestinian passports issued by the Mandate administration until the late 40's when the Mandate was terminated.

There is a good deal of political pressure at the moment to use the words "Palestine" and "Palestinian" as if they referred only to the Arab inhabitants of Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip. There is no justification for this practice, whose manifest purpose, politically, is to destroy both Israel and Jordan. Legally and historically, the term "Palestine" refers to the territories of the Mandate *as originally drawn*—territories which remained part of the Mandate and under its authority, until 1946 or 1948 in the case of what was then Transjordan, and until 1948 for what has now become Israel. The term "Palestinian" therefore means any resident of the territory originally included in the Mandate, whether Moslem, Jewish, or Christian.

This is the import of Security Council Resolution 242, which is now the compulsory basis for the peace negotiations. The Resolution does not contemplate or require a second Palestinian Arab state, distinct from Jordan. Instead it requires the states which are the parties to the conflict to agree on just treatment for the refugees.

In short, Jordan and Israel are the successor states to the Ottoman Empire within the territories of the original Mandate. The Security Council's decisions require and authorize Jordan and Israel, and no one else, to define secure and recognized boundaries between them, and, on that basis, make peace. If special arrangements for the autonomy of the West Bank are to be made, it is for Jordan to do so, within the parts of the area which are ultimately returned to its authority.

EUGENE V. ROSTOW
Yale University Law School
New Haven, Connecticut

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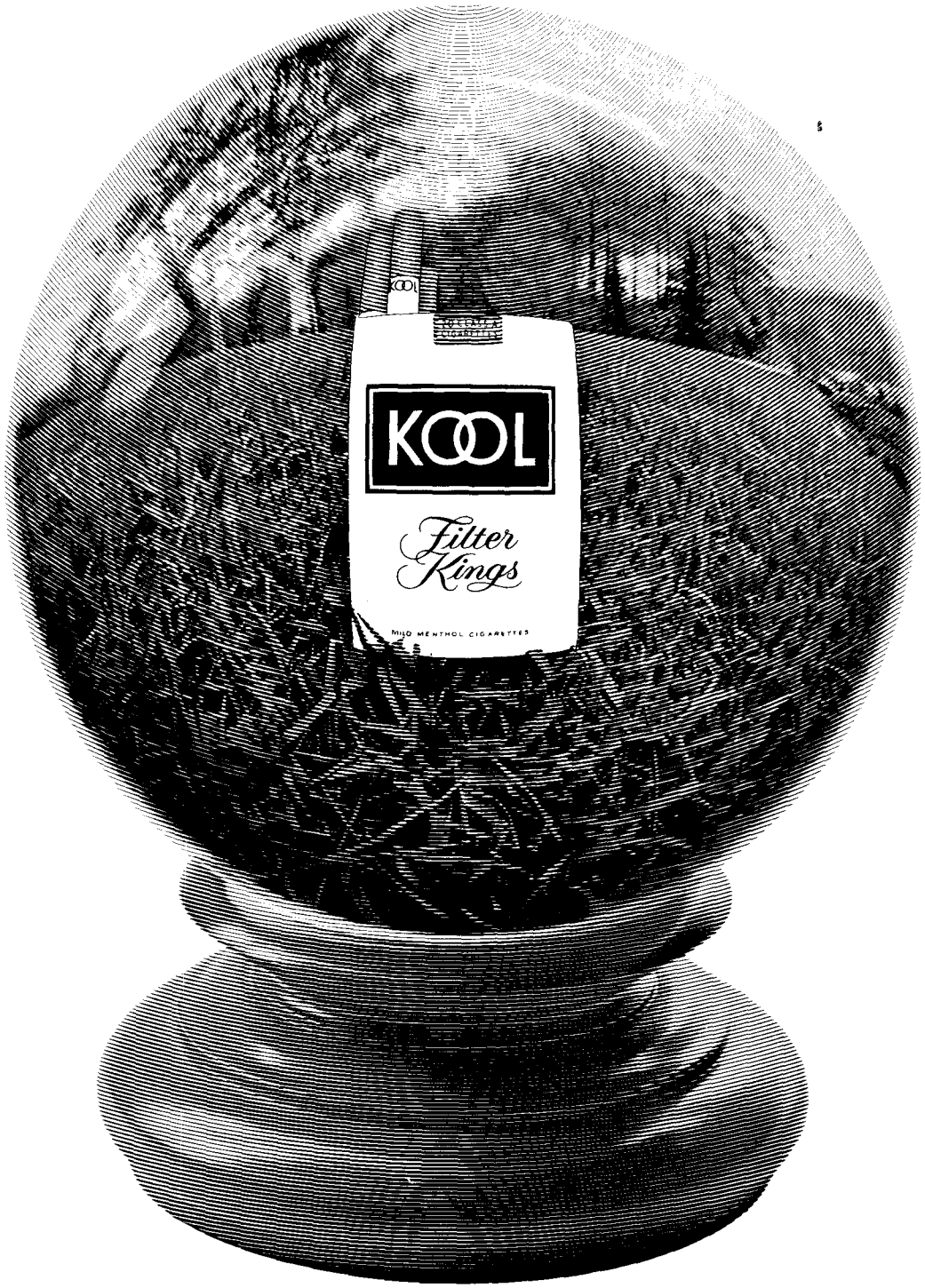

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Kissinger & the Yom Kippur War

Edward N. Luttwak and Walter Laqueur

WHAT happened in October 1973? Or rather, what happened in Washington between October 6, 1973—when fighting erupted on the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights—and 3:30 A.M. on Saturday, October 13, when the definitive orders to start the USAF airlift of arms to Israel were finally issued? During those eight days of mounting agony, while the Israelis lost almost one-fifth of their air force, and were literally running out of ammunition, it seemed as if the survival of the Jewish state would hinge on a single decision, to be made in Washington. For a moment the most intense pressures of global politics converged on a small number of people, whose actions were shaped by their conflicting goals and by their partial views of a constantly changing military situation. Now almost a year later, as Israel and the United States are about to enter a new phase of their unequal dialogue at the Geneva negotiations, a precise account of the events of October 1973 could be of more than historical significance for both governments, and both concerned publics: many of the protagonists are still the same.

Unfortunately, unlike wars or even nuclear alerts, the processes of diplomacy and domestic decision that first held up, and then released, the flow of arms to Israel under siege were not public events. Hence there is no open record. What happened, and failed to happen, in Washington between October 6 and October 13 was the outcome of private meetings and private communications. Much of the time the critical exchanges were verbal. As a result, those who in the future may attempt a reconstruction of these events on the basis of written records will run the risk of being very seriously deceived. The written records are not only incomplete, but there is also a high probability that some are deliberately misleading.

Trained historians, to be sure, are familiar with the dangers of tainted sources. Often they can be overcome by careful textual analysis and by comparisons with all the other evidence. Thus historians of the Roman empire, whose major narrative source for much of the 3rd century is the *Historia Augusta*, a chaotic mixture of pure fabrication and factional slander, have done quite well by skillful analysis of the internal evidence and by interpreting the meaning of coins and epigraphs. Today, almost a year after the great turning point of October 1973, and on the eve of the Geneva peace conference, which may turn out to be another turning point, we ourselves are left with two conflicting accounts of the October crisis, both marked by factional tendentiousness. If, then, we want to uncover the truth, we will have to imitate the methods of the historians of the Roman empire: to analyze and compare the two accounts, testing them for internal coherence and against all the other evidence.

The most widely publicized of these accounts is what might fairly be called the Dinitz-Kissinger version, after Israel's Ambassador to the United States, Simcha Dinitz, and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Its most authoritative statement can be found in a recent book published by two diplomatic correspondents, Marvin Kalb and Bernard Kalb.* The Dinitz-Kissinger version is straightforward. Almost from the very beginning, and well before the full gravity of the conflict could be appreciated in either Washington or Tel Aviv, the Secretary of State had decided that Israel should be allowed to obtain military supplies in the United States. But the Pentagon disagreed. Seemingly more concerned with oil interests and oil supply than with the survival of Israel, Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger and his senior aides rejected an Israeli request for selected items of ammunition and spare parts on the morning of Monday, October 8. They also refused to authorize the accelerated delivery of the Phantom fighter-bombers, forty-eight of which had been promised long before the war broke out. Told of the flat refusal of the Pentagon, Kissinger said he would help. In the course of the same morning of Monday, October 8, he was already able to reassure Dinitz that (a) El Al aircraft would be allowed to collect high-priority supplies

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* *Kissinger*, Little, Brown, 577 pp., $12.50.

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at U.S. bases; and (b) Israeli aircraft losses would be replaced on a one-for-one basis. However, later on the same day, Dinitz was informed that only *two* Phantoms would in fact be released. He protested to Kissinger that Israel had lost many more. Kissinger in turn "hinted" that he was having "bureaucratic difficulties" with the Pentagon, and that only his "personal intercession" had secured the two Phantoms, the only aircraft released so far.

In the meantime, combat reports from Sinai were beginning to change the optimistic estimates made in Tel Aviv and relayed to Washington. By late evening on Monday, October 8, Dinitz received instructions to present a request list for much more matériel, which was needed much sooner. Meeting Kissinger, Dinitz told him that several Senators had already volunteered their services, and that "he did not know how long he could hold off a public outcry." So far Israel had received nothing.

From Monday until Wednesday in the Dinitz-Kissinger version the same themes are constantly repeated. Schlesinger and the Pentagon maintained their obdurate opposition to any and all aid for Israel. Kissinger continued to fight "bureaucratic battles" (with Presidential support) to obtain the release of aircraft and supplies. Dinitz, the recipient of constant reassurance, continued to remain loyal to his tacit bargain with Kissinger, and did nothing to encourage the pro-Israel forces on Capitol Hill, whose agitation could otherwise have seriously embarrassed the Secretary of State. Thus, for example, on Tuesday, October 9, Kissinger reported to Dinitz that he was engaged in a "one-man fight" with the Pentagon, and revealed that the President had decided to replace all Israeli losses. This being so, there was clearly no need to "unleash" Israel's friends.

WEDNESDAY, October 10, was the critical day of the crisis. Until then, expectations of a quick victory, and therefore of an early cease-fire, had persisted. But although the Syrians had been stopped and were about to be pushed back, the Israeli tank offensive in Sinai had failed, and with heavy losses. Hence there could no longer be an easy victory. It was now realized, in both Tel Aviv and Washington, that there would be many more days of hard fighting, perhaps weeks. It was also appreciated, for the first time, that the Israelis were running out of consumables, i.e., ammunition and spare parts. There was, for example, a critical shortage of tank ammunition. A thirty-day supply of this item alone, 105mm tank shells, would have cost the Israelis a quarter of a billion dollars. Israel's defense budget could not sustain such costs, and stock levels of tank ordnance, as of everything else, had accordingly been set on the basis of a very short war. By Wednesday, October 10, it was apparent that Israeli stocks would be exhausted in a matter of days. Israeli plans for a general offensive in Sinai would have to be suspended until resupply was guaranteed, and so stock levels had an immediate impact on the course of the war.

All this gave a new meaning to Israeli requests for supplies. It was no longer a matter of replacing lost aircraft and providing odds and ends, short "shelf-life" items, and such: Israel now needed total logistic support, from plain rifle ammunition to battle tanks. This in turn meant that El Al could no longer transport even the most urgent requirements, and that the United States would have to *deliver* supplies instead of merely "releasing" them, if it were to help at all.

Fortunately—the Dinitz-Kissinger account goes on—the Israelis had by then already been granted their requests in principle; only the detailed arrangements remained to be settled. But once again Schlesinger and the Pentagon proved to be immovable. A scheduled meeting between Dinitz and Schlesinger to discuss "logistical details" which had been secured (by "Presidential arm-twisting") was canceled by the Secretary at the last minute, and no new appointment was set.

Here a new figure enters into the Dinitz-Kissinger version. William Clements, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and a wealthy drilling contractor "with close ties to the oil industry," is portrayed as the evil genius of Schlesinger, and the chief obstructionist in the Pentagon. By Thursday, October 11, bewildered Israeli supporters who realized by then that things were not going well and who could not understand the Israeli embassy's failure to activate public pressure against Kissinger and the administration, were being told that Clements was the obstacle. Few people knew who Clements was.

On Thursday, October 11, with Israel's predicament ever more intense, Kissinger instructed Schlesinger to charter twenty civilian transports to deliver the most urgent supplies. "Kissinger wasn't sure, at that point, if Schlesinger intended to help." And indeed Schlesinger again refused to cooperate. But Kissinger intervened with Nixon and Schlesinger received a direct Presidential order. On Thursday evening Dinitz was also told that six Phantoms would at long last be delivered. By then Israel needed many more. Dinitz now decided, according to this account, that unless more aid were forthcoming he would "go public"—that is, encourage Israel's friends in Congress to put pressure on the administration.

As of Friday, October 12, the total flow of aid to Israel was still limited to what a handful of El Al aircraft could carry on the long flight to Lod in Israel. There, the air force was curtailing its operations in order to conserve aircraft, and army ammunition stocks were nearing the danger point. Lives were being lost for lack of fire-power. And yet—still according to the Dinitz-Kissinger version—Schlesinger and the Pentagon remained uncooperative. U.S. airlines and charter companies had refused to make their aircraft

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available for fear of Arab reprisals, and on Friday morning around 10 A.M. Kissinger "snapped" an order to Schlesinger to use military aircraft—in other words, transports of the Military Airlift Command (MAC). It was recognized that this would make American aid a "high-profile" operation, and fully official.

On that day, at 6 P.M., Dinitz and Mordechai Gur, the then military attaché at the Israeli embassy (and now Israeli Chief of Staff), were finally received by Schlesinger in the Pentagon, with Clements and other aides present. Dinitz complained bitterly of the lack of American support. He pointed out that a massive Russian airlift and sealift to both Egypt and Syria had been under way for several days. Schlesinger then informed Dinitz that the U.S. had tried and failed to charter civilian aircraft. U.S. military aircraft would now fly urgent supplies but only as far as the Azores, in the eastern Atlantic. The Israelis themselves would have to take care of the long flight from the Azores to Israel. As for the Phantoms, Israel would receive "one-and-a-half" Phantoms per day. But after "a couple of days," deliveries would cease while the United States reviewed the situation. In any event, the absolute maximum would be a total of sixteen Phantoms.

Dinitz and Gur were horrified. Despite all the promises of the last several days, it seemed that the Pentagon would not help after all. Schlesinger and Clements were clearly making policy on their own. Once again—late on Friday night—Dinitz went to Kissinger for a "brief but dramatic" meeting. There were bitter complaints and a request for the immediate delivery of thirty-two Phantoms; there was also a threat.

Public, press, and Congress clearly supported Israel. So far, the Israeli ambassador had made no real effort to organize pressure on the administration. But now, just after 11 P.M. on Friday, October 12, the seventh day of the war and three days after the supply crisis had become acute, Dinitz at long last was threatening to appeal for public and Congressional support. Kissinger promised immediate help to overcome the "bureaucratic difficulties." He "warned," "admonished," and "instructed" Schlesinger. He accused Clements and others of obstructionism. He demanded action. Later still that night, Kissinger saw Nixon, and (as the Kalbs put it), "It would have been extraordinary if he did not lay particular stress on the Pentagon's obstructionist tactics." Nixon responded. He ordered Schlesinger to send twenty C-130 transports direct to Israel, and ten others to the Azores. By 1:45 A.M. Dinitz was told that Nixon had also ordered the prompt delivery of ten Phantoms.

The last act, according to the Dinitz-Kissinger version, took place on the morning of Saturday October 13, eighth day of the war. At an emergency meeting at the White House, Schlesinger was still explaining his failure to charter civilian aircraft. Nixon "exploded." A direct order was given yet again. Kissinger, however, remained suspicious of the Pentagon's "bureaucratic obstructionism"—that is, the delaying tactics of Schlesinger, Clements, *et al.* Together with his aides, Kissinger accordingly monitored the situation closely. So far only twenty lightly-loaded C-130 medium transports had actually flown out to Israel. Another ten, originally due to land supplies in the Azores for transshipment, were now redirected to make full transit to Lod. It was only in the afternoon of Saturday, October 13, that the "real" airlift began, with the departure of the first C-5's, long-range heavy transports with many times the capacity of the C-130's. With this, the Dinitz-Kissinger version records the final victory of a persistent ambassador and a sympathetic Secretary of State over the oil lobby and its spokesmen in the Pentagon.

ANOTHER version of the "airlift crisis"—the anti-Kissinger version—to be found in part in a widely publicized magazine article by Tad Szulc, flatly contradicts the Dinitz-Kissinger account. In this account, policy was made by Kissinger while the Pentagon merely followed orders.

According to this version, Kissinger was determined to deny Israel the logistic support necessary for a general offensive in Sinai. There was, however, a grave obstacle to his policy. An overt refusal to help Israel would meet with fierce opposition in Congress, in the media, and, above all, on Capitol Hill. Kissinger could count on Senator Fulbright to see both morality and *raison d'état* in any anti-Israeli policy; Senator Mansfield expressed his total stock of wisdom on foreign affairs on October 10 when he told newsmen, "I want no more Vietnams," and he too would go along. But such allies would not suffice to outweigh popular and Congressional support for Israel.

To make matters worse from Kissinger's point of view, by Wednedsay, October 10, it became public knowledge that large-scale Russian airlifts and sealifts to Egypt and Syria were under way. This meant that the potential for Israeli pressures on the administration to release supplies was becoming much greater. For with the Russians so strongly engaged on one side, Israel would find new allies in unsuspected quarters.

Worse was yet to come. While Washington absorbed the news of the airlift, which proved that the Russians had violated the famous agreement on U.S.-USSR cooperation to avert threats to peace, the Russians managed to violate the remaining substantive clause of the agreement by openly inciting Algeria and other Arab states to join in the war. At the same time, a further erosion in the détente was registered when word reached Washington that the Russians were encouraging Arab oil producers to cut off supplies

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to the West. These Russian moves considerably weakened Kissinger's hand, making it all the more difficult for an already very fragile administration to resist the pressures of Israel's friends in Congress and the country at large.

At this juncture Dinitz became a key figure for Kissinger. If Dinitz could be persuaded that matters were best handled by "high-level" diplomacy, he would refrain from soliciting the support of Israel's friends on Capitol Hill. The latter, in turn, receiving no appeals from the embassy, would naturally assume that all was well in U.S.-Israeli relations. In other words, Dinitz could help to contain public pressures for aid to Israel that the administration could resist in no other way.

KISSINGER'S handling of Dinitz in this version of the story emerges as a remarkable exercise in diplomatic technique. There was, first of all, a purely personal element. Throughout the crisis Kissinger was always turning a sympathetic ear to Israeli requests. Whatever else might stand in the way of American aid for Israel, it was not the Secretary of State. Second, Kissinger constantly reminded Dinitz in subtle ways that they were not only allies but colleagues, equals in a sense. This provided a further incentive to keep matters at the "highest diplomatic level," instead of seeking support in the corridors of Capitol Hill, where men and circumstances are often so much less distinguished than on the seventh floor of the State Department. At a critical moment, when Dinitz showed signs of wavering, Kissinger had a special direct telephone—a "hot line," in effect—installed in his office at the Israeli embassy.

The third manipulative technique was altogether more elaborate, though far from original. Known in police circles as the "Mutt and Jeff" routine, the technique is intended to undermine the resolve of the victim by creating a false sense of solidarity. While one policeman is friendly and overtly sympathetic, the other is harsh, even brutal. This leads the victim under interrogation to see the friendly policeman as an ally, to the point of confiding in him, especially since the friendly policeman intimates that he is doing all he can to help the victim against his brutal colleague.

With their feet "nailed to the ground" by national (i.e., Kissinger's) policy, Schlesinger and his men—in this second version—played the role of the brutal policeman while Kissinger was the sympathetic cop. Clements added color to the performance. As an oil-connected Texan, Clements was an ideal prop that could be wheeled in to act as the living personification of the pro-Arab oil lobby; and full use was made of him.

For all Kissinger's skill in handling Dinitz, and through him Israel's friends in Washington, and also the Cabinet in Tel Aviv, pure manipulation could not suffice for long. For despite all the talk about "bureaucratic obstructionism," Schlesinger was not sufficiently plausible in the role of a major obstacle to Kissinger in his "one-man fight" to open the supply pipeline to Israel. An intellectual out of RAND, Schlesinger had no independent power-base, and was not cut out for the part thrust on him as the chief spokesman of the pro-Arab oil lobby, not even with Clements as his deputy. Kissinger was thus in danger of losing control over Dinitz, which would mean that the release of arms supplies to Israel would have to follow almost immediately.

It was at this point (according to the second version) that on Wednesday, October 10, Kissinger's office originated the first of the supply plans—the charter of civilian aircraft. This scheme had a dual purpose. If the charters *could* be arranged, the mechanical limitations of civilian aircraft, and the time needed to organize an airlift, would delay and restrict the flow of arms to Israel. This in turn would perhaps discourage the Israelis from launching their offensive in Sinai. Further, the United States would be maintaining a "low profile," at any rate lower than if *military* aircraft were used. And if—as it must have been suspected—the charters could *not* be arranged, the scheme would still serve to mollify Dinitz, and prevent him from "going public" at least for another day or two.

According to this second version, even when it became clear that the civilian-charter scheme would not work, Kissinger refused to allow the military airlift, the "MAC all-the-way" solution, as it was known. Instead, his office originated the second "low-profile" scheme—the one calling for the delivery of supplies to the Azores, with the Israelis providing air transport for the second half of the journey to Israel. Under this scheme, MAC aircraft would deliver supplies at a U.S. base on one island while El Al aircraft would have to collect their loads at a civilian airport which was on a different island. The transshipment of air-transport pallets requires special handling equipment; and the transfer of supplies from one island to the next would require ships. It was not even known if these were available. Further, Portuguese cooperation would be needed, and when Dinitz was being briefed on the scheme it had not yet been obtained. At best, it would take several days to organize a viable transshipment scheme, and the increment in capacity over the direct-flight solution by El Al aircraft from the U.S. would be small. In fact, the scheme was a logistic nightmare and wholly impractical.

Nevertheless it too served its purpose. For on Friday, October 12, when the civilian-charter scheme was on its last legs, Dinitz was once again persuaded by means of the Azores scheme that he need not "go public."

So far Kissinger had used the services of the Pentagon, and had also carried the President with him. Distracted by the Agnew resignation, long preoccupied with the ever-deepening Watergate

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crisis, Nixon supported Kissinger's policy, though it probably went against the grain. Nixon did not like to see U.S. policy make a passive response to the Russian logistic intervention. Moreover, having received appeals from Israel, and from Israel's supporters in the United States who were now too anxious to wait for a signal from Dinitz, and keenly aware of the possible political consequences of a further delay, Nixon finally intervened directly. Very late on Friday night he instructed Schlesinger to implement his "MAC all-the-way" solution, so long as Kissinger's consent was obtained. Even now, after 1 A.M. on Saturday, October 13, Kissinger hesitated, and tried to explore alternatives. Almost from the start the Defense Department had maintained that there was no practical solution other than a full-scale airlift; now it was in receipt of a direct Presidential order, and no longer willing to try any more of Kissinger's alternative schemes for a low-profile resupply operation. The Israeli military attaché was present when after a planning meeting in the Pentagon the orders went out at around 3:30 A.M. to send the C-5's on their way. Yet another obstacle suddenly emerged when the Portuguese objected to American use of Azores base facilities to help Israel. A refueling stop in the Azores was not strictly speaking essential, but it would increase the delivery capacity of the C-5 by a considerable margin, and make C-130 flights practical. A firm letter from Nixon persuaded the Portuguese to waive their objections, and with this the airlift resumed in full swing.

So ends this second—anti-Kissinger—version of the airlift crisis. It is clear that the two versions conflict and, ostensibly, we have no way of choosing between the two. Still, as in the case of the historians of ancient Rome, we are not left totally in the dark.

We must first consider the known facts, which set outer limits to the unknown. As both the President's National Security Adviser and Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger was then in firm control of the country's foreign policy; more so than any of his recent predecessors, except perhaps John Foster Dulles. Only the strongest possible evidence would suffice to persuade us that Schlesinger could have opposed so blatantly the President's "foreign-policy czar," especially since we are also told in the first version that Kissinger was all along supported by Nixon. No such evidence has been presented. Accordingly, the notion that Kissinger's policy was successfully blocked by Schlesinger for an entire week remains highly implausible.

A fortiori the same argument applies for the supposed role of Clements. The Nixon administration, then still a living creature, was noted for its high degree of centralization; it was a regime in which no Deputy Secretary of Anything could oppose Presidential policy in the manner portrayed by the Dinitz-Kissinger version of the crisis. He would have been out in a matter of hours. Readers of *Pravda* would no doubt be told that Clements was more than a mere Deputy Secretary as the oil industry's man in Washington. But even if we are crude Marxists, in order to believe the Dinitz-Kissinger version we must further assume that Schlesinger's policy was captive to the will of his deputy, which contradicts what is known of the character of the two men. Yet even if this assumption were true, the first objection would still stand: Clements, too, could not have challenged Kissinger's recognized primacy in foreign policy unless he had Nixon's support, a highly unlikely possibility that the promoters of the first version have not even suggested.

And then there is some external evidence, stray bits of information, comparable to the coin symbolism and official epigraphs that sometimes illuminate a man or an episode of ancient history. One of these is quite critical. On Wednesday, October 10, when Israeli stock levels emerged as a major consideration in both versions of the story, Major General Sumner of the Pentagon, relaying instructions from the Secretary of Defense, told Mordechai Gur, the Israeli military attaché, that the Israelis were not to curtail their operations because of expected supply shortages. Now, in the context of the first version of the story, this piece of information does not fit at all: Schlesinger was then supposed to be doing all he could to prevent any aid to Israel. But in the second version of the story, where Schlesinger was merely following Kissinger's policy, this piece of information does make sense. By then aware of how low Israeli stocks of "consumables" were, and having the expertise needed to appreciate the precise implications of future supplies for current operations, the Secretary of Defense was intimating to the Israelis that they would ultimately obtain what they needed, and conveying his own suggestion that they proceed with their planned offensive against the Egyptians in Sinai.

A second piece of evidence which is suggestive rather than definitive concerns the Azores scheme. It is very difficult to believe—as the first version requires us to do—that this scheme originated in the Defense Department, but quite easy to believe that it came—as the second version holds—from the State Department. In the State Department men are expected to be generalists. In the Department of Defense, specialist tasks are given to specialists. And no logistics man could have originated the inter-island transshipment scheme, which would have violated every rule in the book, and every professional instinct.

Finally there is some internal evidence. In the Dinitz-Kissinger version as reproduced in the Kalb book, a discrepancy slips in, in the form of a direct quotation attributed to Kissinger, describing his response to the Russian airlift: "We tried to talk in the first week. When that didn't

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work, we said, fine, we'll start pouring in equipment until we create a new reality." Apparently, then, it was not until Friday, October 12 (after one week), that Kissinger decided that the United States would have to help Israel. Yet Dinitz is supposed to have been given assurances of support by Kissinger at least since October 7, and it was only the Pentagon which is supposed to have prevented him from delivering on his promise of "rapid results."

Thus, as in the case of the *Historia Augusta*, here too a judgment can be made. While discounting the elements of personal animosity in both versions, it seems most plausible that the main obstacle to a rapid flow of military supplies to Israel was not Schlesinger, let alone Clements. It could only have been Kissinger.

But why? Why should Kissinger have been so eager to deny aid to Israel in the first week of the war? The answer lies in the diplomatic background. In a nutshell, Kissinger hoped for Soviet cooperation in managing the crisis; he also thought that a low-profile policy would limit the damage to America's relations with the oil-producing countries of the Arab world.

By October 1973, the Middle Eastern diplomacy of the United States was a wasteland of abortive plans, "interim" solutions, and countless *ad hoc* proposals. Again and again, the State Department had tried to persuade the Egyptians to make political concessions in exchange for Israeli territorial concessions. But there was an obvious asymmetry in the exchange. While Israel was being asked to surrender territory, the most tangible of concessions, the Egyptians could only offer verbal undertakings. If the Israelis gave up the Sinai side of the Canal, the Egyptians were to promise that they would agree to negotiate; if the Israelis gave up the whole of Sinai, the Egyptians would issue a declaration of non-belligerency. Ultimately, it was this fundamental difference in the *nature* of the concessions to be solicited from each side that defeated all the efforts of Secretary Rogers, as those of his predecessors, after 1967. Whenever a new proposal was manufactured in the State Department, it was met with just enough of a positive response in Cairo and Tel Aviv to encourage its official adoption in Washington as a formal initiative. But each time American envoys would set out for the Middle East, it was only to find that the Egyptians could not bring themselves to make the right noises, while the Israelis refused to give up territory in exchange for vague and heavily qualified Egyptian promises. This was a position that Israel's friends in the United States were willing to support.

From the viewpoint of American diplomacy, every attempt made things a little worse than before. While the unresolved conflict was constantly eroding Western interests in the Arab world, the repeated failures of American diplomacy were steadily diminishing its credibility. And paradoxically enough, the one "success" of American diplomacy did more to damage its credibility than all the failures. This was the Egypt-Israel "cease-fire and stand-still" agreement of August 7, 1970, procured by Secretary Rogers. At that time, the Israelis were losing a casualty or two each day to Egyptian artillery fire along the Canal, while the Egyptians were suffering much heavier losses to Israeli air attacks. By then the Russians were present in force, with their own squadrons of MiG-21's patrolling the Nile Valley, and an array of Russian-operated missile batteries, which were being moved ever closer to the edge of the water. In August 1970 Egyptian losses and Israeli fears of an increasing open-ended Russian involvement had matured to the point where each side was willing to accept a cease-fire and stand-still agreement. The Israelis would suspend air attacks, while Russians and Egyptians would stop moving their missile belts forward.

At first, Secretary Rogers won great credit for the cease-fire/stand-still, but almost immediately it became apparent that the Egyptians, with full Russian cooperation, were massively violating the "stand-still" provisions. Theoretically, it was up to the United States to take action, since the agreement was underwritten by an implicit American guarantee. The response of the State Department to Israeli complaints came as a shock. After attempting to deny that the violations had taken place, only to be proved wrong by the evidence of both Israeli and American photographic reconnaissance, Secretary Rogers made no effort to force the Egyptians to comply with the terms of the agreement. Instead, the Israelis were offered compensation, in the shape of additional military equipment. In other words they were bought off. More than anything else, the debacle of the 1970 cease-fire hardened Israeli resolve in subsequent negotiations. No territory was to be surrendered without direct Israel-Arab negotiations. The Egyptians, for their part, continued to assert that direct negotiations were utterly unacceptable: non-recognition remained the fundamental plank of Arab policy toward Israel.

As far as Kissinger was concerned, this was the operational context of the war of October 1973; if American diplomacy were to achieve anything, the stalemate between an irreconcilable Egypt and an immovable Israel had to be broken. Before the war actually began, Kissinger concentrated on dissuading the Israelis from launching a preemptive strike. As it later emerged, the Israeli government had in any case already decided that it could not afford the diplomatic costs of attacking first.

(Yet whatever it might have meant in diplomatic terms, preemption had a precise military meaning. It would take almost three days to mobilize

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the Israeli army fully, but the air force was always at a high state of readiness, since all first-line squadrons were manned by regulars. As a result, two hundred or more strike aircraft could have immediately been sent into action, while keeping an adequate force of home defense fighters in reserve. Even if only five or six sorties had been flown by each aircraft before the Arab invasion armies could have moved into action in full strength, the Israeli air force could have delivered almost three thousand tons of bombs and rockets on the long columns of carriers and tanks, and on the supply depots east of the Golan cease-fire line and west of the Canal. Arab air defenses were very dense and already in a state of alert: Israeli air losses would have been heavy. Even so, losses would have been lower and results much better than those which could be achieved once the war began. A devastating blow would have been inflicted to Arab forces on the ground, and to Arab morale. Hundreds of Israeli lives could have been saved. And as for the diplomatic costs of preemption, these would undoubtedly have been heavy, but perhaps not quite as heavy as it was then thought. In their unconquerable innocence, the Israelis were shocked to discover after the event that from Albania to Zaire the governments of the world were uninterested in the evidence, and that the moral issue of who fired first did not after all make any difference. Rather the reverse. Most governments blandly accused the Israelis of being aggressors. Clearly only the United States mattered, and it remains an open question whether an Israeli air strike against Arab forces *whose offensive had entered the operational phase* would have made much of a difference to American opinion.)

In the first days of the war, the expectation of a quick Israeli victory persisted. In Washington it was known that it would take more than seventy hours to mobilize the reserves. Since the war had started on Saturday, it would not be until Tuesday that a full-scale Israeli counter-offensive could be expected, and the estimate was that the Arabs would be decisively defeated a day or two after that. While this outcome was regarded in Washington as inevitable, it was not especially welcome. Defeated once again and humiliated still further, the Arabs would strike up postures of defiance yet more extreme, while the Israelis would be even less willing to give up territories whose solid tactical value had been proved so resoundingly in the first stage of the war. In other words, the majority view in Washington was that an Israeli victory would merely harden the pre-1973 diplomatic stalemate.

At this stage Kissinger, who shared this view, took the position that the only thing the United States could do was avoid actions which might intensify Arab hostility. The threat of an oil embargo was already manifest. In any case, Israel would not need any help, and the issue would be settled not in Washington but on the battlefield. When the intelligence picture of the conflict began to change, however, so did the range of possibilities. Perhaps an Israeli victory and the consequent diplomatic stalemate were not inevitable after all. As Israeli appeals for arms and ammunition became more urgent and more inclusive, new opportunities opened up. Israel would receive only limited assistance, and would thus be forced to accept a cease-fire which left the Egyptians in control of the narrow strip of land they had won in the first two days of the war. Then and only then American diplomacy would move into action. Having suffered and lost, the Israelis could be manipulated by remote control through the supply of military equipment, or its denial. They would be forced to make territorial concessions. Having won a *limited* victory, the Egyptians would most probably become more tractable, and Sadat would have established a political base which would allow him to make the required diplomatic concessions.

By Wednesday, October 10, it must have become clear that after years of drift American policy could at long last determine the course of events in the Middle East. As the Israelis produced a series of longer and longer lists, it was the *range* of the items—from standard rifle ammunition to underwear, from blankets to Phantoms—which made it increasingly obvious that they were in no position to launch a general counter-offensive in Sinai unless they received full logistic support. Kissinger had now become the ultimate quartermaster-general of the Israeli army, and could control its operations by modulating the flow of supplies. Anti-tank rockets and small quantities of other essentials delivered by El Al would suffice to contain Egyptian attacks at the Sinai passes and perhaps to launch a limited counter-attack. They would not suffice for a major Israeli victory.

There was undoubtedly no Machiavellian grand design in Kissinger's mind; American foreign policy simply reacted to events as they unfolded. Kissinger did not, of course, want the Israelis to be defeated, but on the other hand a total Israeli victory would have been highly undesirable. He was in favor of supplying arms to Israel but, in contrast to the Pentagon, he thought that this could be accomplished by waving a magic wand and without a military airlift. Consequently the pressures of public opinion and Congress for prompt and massive aid to Israel had to be contained. And this in turn could only be done by neutralizing the pressures at the source, in Tel Aviv, through the Israeli embassy in Washington. Hence the charade that was so successfully played out for the benefit of the Israelis.

As a matter of fact, Kissinger's role was even more complicated than this. For during that first week there were those in Israel who were in favor of an early cease-fire, and a request to ar-

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range one even reached Washington. That was a diplomatic impossibility. If the *Arabs* wanted a cease-fire, they could get it in the Security Council as a matter of course, and very quickly. But if the Israelis asked for one, it would even be very difficult to convene a meeting. The Soviet delegates would cheerfully deny that there was any urgency, and neither Britain nor France would be willing to act. Hence while Kissinger kept the supply tap firmly shut, in order to weaken the Israelis, he also had to discourage those in Israel who accepted the logical alternative of a cease-fire, which would leave the Egyptians in place. For that too would make a diplomatic resolution of the conflict impossible, since the Egyptians would never agree to talk if they could win more ground, but only if they faced the prospect of losing what little they had won.

On Saturday, October 13, the airlift was ordered into action by Nixon and the Israelis received the means to attack, and win. They crossed the Canal and were about to trap the entire Egyptian army in a classic double envelopment, which could only result in a battle of annihilation, another Cannae. The little flags showing unit positions on situation maps in Tel Aviv, Washington, Moscow, and—belatedly—Cairo made this by far the most probable outcome. Suddenly, therefore, the Russians became very eager for a cease-fire; after much effort they had persuaded Sadat that the combat reports of his generals were not to be trusted, and that the outlook was bleak. The Russians turned to the United States seeking its support for the imposition of a cease-fire at the United Nations. For reasons not readily apparent, Kissinger immediately responded to the Russian request and flew to Moscow; perhaps he thought the détente was in grave danger. Later, it was falsely claimed that the Russians were threatening to take forceful action, but in fact this only happened *after* the cease-fire. In Moscow the October 22 cease-fire agreement was quickly reached, while the Israeli government was still instructing its commanders in the field that they could afford to advance slowly and carefully, since there was no danger of a premature cease-fire which would prevent the encirclement of the Egyptian army.

Most of Kissinger's subsequent moves in the Middle East have been based on the limits successively imposed on Israeli military action, themselves the result of successful diplomatic manipulation. Of course, Kissinger may claim that it is not his methods that matter but rather the results. On the surface, the United States has won a great diplomatic victory. The current journalistic formula is that the Russian presence in Egypt has been displaced by American influence, or, more grandly, it is said that the Soviet Union "has been driven from the Arab world" by the successes of American diplomacy. It is certainly true that relations between Egypt and the Soviet Union are frigid, but it is far from clear whether the fact that President Sadat kisses Kissinger on both cheeks every time they meet means very much. It certainly does not amount to "influence." If that word means anything, it implies that Egypt would be responsive to American *desiderata*. So far, Egypt has merely been responsive to American promises of more chunks of Israeli-controled territory, investment money, nuclear reactors, and so on. In fact, it is the universal consensus of those who talk with Egyptian leaders nowadays that their expectations of what Kissinger will be able to deliver are grossly exaggerated. It is the familiar pattern of the Soviet-American détente all over again, with its inevitable progression from diplomatic euphoria to a deepening disenchantment.

As for influence in the Arab world beyond Egypt, its concrete significance is to be measured in the price of oil. Even at present levels, oil prices are bringing about the gradual destruction of the Western economies. Pessimists think that the crash will come in a year. Optimists confidently assert that it will take three years. The focus and test of American diplomacy in the Middle East should accordingly be the reduction of the price of oil. Unless this happens, there is little meaning to American "influence" in the Arab world. So far, the price of oil has not gone down.

As far as Israel is concerned, the October war naturally falls into the context of Arab-Israeli relations in 1948, 1956, and 1967. On each occasion conflict was precipitated by the Arab refusal to accept a territorial status quo. On each occasion the Arabs fought and lost. On each occasion the Arabs subsequently appealed to great-power diplomacy in order to restore the very status quo which they had previously held to be unacceptable. The war of October 1973 has broken this pattern. This was largely due to the unreadiness of the Israelis in the first days of war, and to the changed international political climate which made the use of the Arab "oil weapon" feasible. But American policy also played an important role. The long-term consequences for the security of Israel are impossible to foresee.

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Delmore

A 30's Friendship and Beyond

William Barrett

"We were never more free than under the Occupation." Change the last word to Depression, and you have the truth of the 30's—at least for some of us. Without jobs, the young were not chained immediately to the wheel of career and profession. We could abandon ourselves to the delight of irrelevant studies. Columbia University was then a congregation of odd souls. From behind the woodwork; from drains, cesspools, and middens they crept across 113th Street into halls, libraries, classrooms; and then were sucked slowly back into the subway or adjacent cafeterias. The coffers of the university weren't swollen by their presence, for many simply sat in and paid no tuition. A park bench or the halls of learning—they were equally a Depression refuge. Why should you pay more for the one than the other?

If the "American Encounter with Marxism" is ever written up properly, it will have to take account of this peculiar relaxation and *bonhomie* of the 30's. The economy of the country was in a shambles, and by all Marxist laws we should have been in the throes of a genuinely revolutionary situation. Actually, in the camaraderie of poverty the stigma itself of being poor was lost, and the country was swept into a new feeling of social unity: the spirit of bank holiday and moral holiday, in which one was blessedly released for a time from keeping up with the Joneses. Those who are young can catch a glimpse of it in some of the old 30's movies. The same feeling carried on into the war. The war movies—to ring one more variation on Clausewitz—were simply the extension of the 30's movies by other means. Change the guns and uniforms and you had the same actors, types, and plots, the same populist optimism and good will, the same confidence that right and wrong were always clearly discernible and that the right stood by our side. It was our Marxist decade; yet the irony was that its experience of Marxism was of something remote and distant—either intellectually in the intricacies of theory that didn't mesh with our actual life, or romantically remote in the deeds of socialist heroes in far-off lands. Of course, none of this ever occurred to us then while we were passionately arguing Marxist theory.

Thirty years later the same campus was being torn apart during the violence of the 60's. The children of middle-class affluence, mouthing Marxist slogans, were demanding "relevant" studies. And the economy? The country was then enjoying an economic prosperity beyond the wildest dreams of our earlier decade. You are puzzled, comrades? It's just the Dialectic—as we used to say back in the 30's.

The changing decades have also worked some violent reversals in individual fortunes. When Delmore Schwartz died in 1966, he was on his way to becoming a forgotten man in literary circles. He had actually disappeared from the scene, hiding out from the last few friends he had. Thirty years before, after his first book, *In Dreams Begin Responsibilities* (1938), he had been proclaimed the brightest new star in American letters. Principally a poet, he had shown himself also brilliant in fiction and prose—there seemed nothing he couldn't do, and do successfully. His second book, *Genesis,* in 1943 was a setback, but as an editor of *Partisan Review* he still remained prominent as critic, commentator, and general man of letters. His declining reputation as a poet was given a lift again by the Bollingen Prize in 1960 for his *Selected Poems,* though the award was mainly commemorative of past performance. Thereafter he went to pieces rapidly, and at the end of his life was scarcely sane. The lines from Wordsworth he particularly loved to quote became prophetic in his case:

> We poets in our youth begin in gladness,
> But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

But we are now in the 70's, and the wheel of fortune spins again: a serious revival is afoot, and two biographers are at work digging up his life. In the space of four decades four reversals of fortune! The stockmarket of American success can be as unpredictable as Wall Street.

Paul Goodman, who outlived Delmore by several years, suffered a very different spin of fortune, and comparison is almost inevitable because the two lives were to intersect rather violently at one point. While success had come too early and spectacularly to Delmore, leaving him at a height

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where he felt somewhat dizzy, it came too late to Paul to heal altogether the scars that long years of non-recognition had inflicted.

I didn't meet Delmore at Columbia, but I remember our first meeting against that background because if it hadn't been for one of the absurdities of campus life I wouldn't have known him at all. Among the hordes of drifters whose actual connection with the university was never discovered, there was a young lady who was going around trying to assemble a salon. Her family had a large and sumptuous apartment—which gave her something of a head start for collecting intellectuals—in that part of the West Side we then called the Golden Ghetto. She had invited me a few times, but I'd never got around to going. This time her invitation was more insistent. It seems there was a young man coming up from downtown and we were simply made to know each other. The word "spiritual" was foreign to our vocabularies in those days, but I think now that such was the nature of the bond she was trying to suggest might come to be between myself and this other unknown. It didn't sound too appetizing, but the promise of refreshments did—in those days one couldn't turn down that kind of invitation casually. The name "Delmore Schwartz" meant nothing, and in fact sounded a little precious. I imagined another lugubrious bookworm like myself, and was scarcely prepared for the bundle of electricity I did meet.

Dwight Macdonald and the late Philip Rahv, both of whom knew him well, have given us very different portraits of Delmore, and their difference illustrates some of the subtler difficulties in writing history. For Dwight, Delmore emerges as a kind of hypermanic Borscht-circuit comedian, for Philip as a driveling neurotic droning on monotonously about his family traumas to a point where one feels only Rahv's great critical dignity restrains him from expressing open contempt. I don't want to quarrel with either picture. And I certainly wouldn't want to quarrel with Dwight's motives, which are those of great affection and generosity. But I suspect his image of Delmore is overshadowed by the later years when the need to play the buffoon became more desperate and the comic performance more raucous and high-strung. As for Philip's motives, they may now be left between him and his Maker; and if he is only a shade of the man he once was, he can be depended upon to give a good account of himself. But neither picture, Dwight's nor Philip's, catches the Delmore I met that first night.

For one thing, there was the quieter Delmore, exquisitely attentive to the person he met, civil almost to the point of diffidence. He was then quite thin, with an ivory pallor, odd-looking but very attractive. (We're talking about the year 1933-34; I date by the academic system from September to the following June, but can't remember the month.) But of course this was a party, and Delmore couldn't stay bottled up forever. When the eruption came, however, it had nothing of the performance about it; there was something very boyish and absolutely spontaneous in the way he got caught up in the excitement of a situation. There would then come that curious hop, as if he couldn't stand still with glee, his arms flapping against his sides like a chicken's wings. He was awkward but very agile. In a later poem he caricatured his body as "the heavy bear that moves with me"; there was nothing bearlike or cumbersome in his movements then. The imitation of Chaplin, for example, that is at best platitudinous and usually a bore, was hilarious in Delmore's case, with all its odd, eccentric, and yet agile flutterings altogether inimitable by anyone else—unless perhaps Chaplin the master had seen it and wanted thereafter to graft new variations on his original.

We hardly knew each other before Delmore was beginning to build some anecdote or other about me. It was a habit of his I was to enjoy during all the time I knew him, and to watch him practice on other people, on anybody he liked in fact. The anecdote might make you a bit ridiculous, but in an endearing way. It singled you out as a special and unique person, somebody whose great value was only enhanced by this or that harmless and slightly comic eccentricity. He was quite ingenious at it, but the impulse itself was altogether spontaneous. It was his way of building a world of affection around you and himself. He had a great need for affection, both to give and receive, except that—well, this "except," this deep-seated force, whatever it was, that made him ultimately destructive and suspicious of affection, both given and received, is more or less the burden of my story here.

That evening he was escorting Gertrude Buckman, his high-school sweetheart whom he was later to marry. She was very pretty and altogether charming, and I promptly fell in love with each of them, and with both as a couple. It was just as well, for my company was to be inflicted upon them a good deal in the years to come.

THE friendship must have formed fast because by the following summer Delmore and I were eating dinner together nearly every evening. I had a temporary job as a social worker, while still studying at Columbia, and had sublet a flat on West 23rd Street; Delmore was finishing his college credits at a summer session at NYU, and had a furnished room farther south in the direction of Washington Square. We met together at the Foltis-Fisher cafeteria (the chain is long since deceased) on 23rd Street, where I invariably ate the 40-cent dinner.

This dinner stands out in my memory as one of the lesser aesthetic triumphs of the Depression years, an austere anticipation of minimal art. Almost musically conceived, it was built along the

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lines of a progression from liquid to solid. It began with soup, nameless and unnameable, the source of which in flesh, fish, or vegetable was undetectable; passed on to become stew, which had a thickening of flour and here and there had a nodding acquaintance with small shreds of meat; and arrived finally at the quivering but unmistakable solidity of Jello. This chaste progression was flanked on both sides by the chords *diminuendo* of bread and coleslaw, the latter watery and limp in order to preserve the liquid-solid theme. So far as I can remember, the 45-cent dinner differed only by the substitution of rolls for bread. But the rolls, which were hard, really lived up to their name and indeed seemed to have been baked in express violation of the biblical warning, "Who of you, if asked for bread, would give me a stone?"*

I didn't see a nickel's worth of difference between the two dinners, and we kidded together about this. In later years Delmore transformed the anecdote: I was cast in the solemn role of the stern friend warning him against his prodigal ways in spending forty-five cents on dinner. It may have been because we ate together so often that eating became the theme of a lot of his anecdotes about me, usually blown up to Gargantuan proportions. I had acquired through necessity the happy talent then, which I wish I could re-acquire now, of being able to disregard my hunger for very long stretches at a time. Consequently when food was put before me, it disappeared. But I think too these anecdotes belonged very much to the period—jokes about eating were part of the camaraderie of hunger in the Depression. A few years later, for example, he had worked up similar anecdotes about Oscar Handlin, the historian, whom he met at Harvard; and once in a Boston restaurant Delmore affected to pit Oscar and me against each other in the tones of a boxing announcer: "The potato famine of Ireland against the famine of the Ukraine!"

WHAT did we talk about over those sumptuous meals? Delmore was studying with Sidney Hook, and I heard a good deal of what was going on in class. Hook was an incomparable teacher in those days, at least according to Delmore's report, and Delmore was extremely critical in these matters and not at all a follower of Hook's philosophy. In fact, he rather worried Hook, who had a kindly and paternal regard for him, because he seemed to be flirting with neo-Thomism and Catholicism. There wasn't any real danger in this direction, however: Delmore was simply a devoted reader of T. S. Eliot's *Criterion,* in which at the time Eliot was making friendly nods in the direction of Gilson and Maritain. What was real, beneath Delmore's rhetorical flourishes, was that he ultimately accepted the religious position—one has to put it that vaguely. I think it was one of the bonds between us. At best, it has to be put negatively: neither of us felt ultimately satisfied with a purely naturalistic view of the world. Delmore was more vocal about these hankerings than I, and more vocal as the years went by. That my background was different also attracted him; he used to milk me for my memories of Catholicism, for they helped him with Dante and Joyce. He used to tease me about it nevertheless. "When your ancestors were painting themselves blue, mine were already people of the Book"; and I used to tease back that it was a pity then he didn't know more of the Book. In retrospect, it isn't so funny: of the Jews who have been my friends, I think Delmore had the least grasp of his own Jewishness—he knew neither how far out nor how deep in he was committed. And yet, perhaps for this reason, he was the most haunted by it, and more haunted as the years went by until it became anguish, and finally a distorted and paranoid anguish.

At the same time we were Marxists—naturally. In our environment then it was taken as a matter of course that any young man of reasonable intelligence and good will would be Marxist. What this might mean for our religious hankerings, or our views on literature and a good many other matters, didn't trouble us much. I don't think we two were particularly flippant intellectually; probably we were more serious about ideas than a good many people around us. It was simply that the more "good will" was a basic motive in the American encounter with Marxism, the less strict could be the doctrine one took from it. Among the most distinguished intellectual interpretations of Marxism in that period are the two books on Marx by Sidney Hook, and Edmund Wilson's *To the Finland Station.* Hook assimilates Marxism to the philosophy of American pragmatism, and in spirit transforms it into a more militant form of the American progressivism of the earlier part of the century. As for Wilson, it is perfectly in the spirit of those times that he should have conceived and written his work as a lovely historical romance—a romance because it was all so far away from the actual American situation. And when years later, disillusioned with Marxism, he appended a postscript, he quite typically found the residual virtues of the whole movement to be thoroughly American in spirit: a protest against class privilege and a plea for an egalitarian society—ideals which any Jacksonian, untouched by the least tinge of Marxist doctrine, could embrace enthusiastically.

I'm not in the least trying to disparage the Marxism of our generation. On the contrary, it was an important chapter in our national and intellectual history. But if we're to understand Marxism in the 70's, we shall have to start from very different premises.

*Memory suddenly stirs: the 45-cent dinner did offer something more—the choice of rice pudding for Jello.

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THE rich are very different from you and me, said Scott Fitzgerald. Delmore was different because he expected to be rich. The riches did not materialize, but the expectation of them gave him different horizons and hopes from the rest of us. We might enjoy the long intervals of joblessness, but somewhere in the back of our minds our expectation from life after all this blissful truancy was something like becoming a high-school teacher, which in fact was rather a coveted job in those days. Delmore would forge ahead doing just what he wanted, which was to write poetry. Paul Goodman was also different; he had his sister Alice. G. B. Shaw once remarked that he did not throw himself into the struggle of life, he threw his mother. Paul threw his sister, and Alice Goodman proved to be more reliable than Delmore's inheritance. Delmore's father had been a buccaneer in real estate who made his million promoting and juggling developments, and he was supposed to have left a considerable estate. But when he was no longer there to juggle, all the spinning plates he had kept aloft came crashing down. The estate turned into a lot of paper. Delmore had to make several trips to Chicago about it, but he never could make clear to me, and I doubt whether he himself grasped, the intricate details of his father's paper empire in Gary, Indiana. In any case, the copious flow of money that had been expected dwindled into a mere trickle for Delmore, his mother, and his brother. Still, he had been marked by princely hopes, and I don't think they ever quite left him.

This decline in fortunes brought with it some family migrations—a succession of apartments ending in a very modest one in Washington Heights, and Delmore came to live more often at home. When he felt desperate about working, he would move to a furnished room; when money was running low, he would return home. I helped him move on several occasions, and one in particular has a point in this narrative.

He couldn't sleep in the furnished room he had because there was too much noise around. In a few days he was looking absolutely worn out. After hunting through the ads, we wound up dragging ourselves along some street in Chelsea. When Delmore moved, he had to have typewriter and books, lots of books, and books are heavy. We collapsed in exhaustion on the stoop of a house that advertised rooms. An old woman, rummaging at the garbage cans behind the iron fence, looked at us suspiciously. At that moment we must have seemed an odd and bedraggled pair. She was the landlady, it turned out, and an altogether remarkable blend of Jewish *yenta* and French *concierge*. In his fatigue Delmore seemed to slip back a generation, and he and the woman might have been haggling across a pushcart. She wanted to know why he had left his last place, he wanted to know if it was quiet here. "Sure it's quiet here," she said. "What do you want, a tomb?" Delmore told her he had trouble sleeping. Not a wise thing to say, for a sleepless man is a threat to all landladies. "Why can't you sleep?" she asked. Delmore would have given thousands then and in the years after to answer that question. "Look at your friend," she went on, putting her finger almost in my face. "He has his troubles too," Delmore interjected in my favor. "Yeah, but he looks like he sleeps. And look at you—" Delmore did look ghastly, his face almost yellow-green with fatigue. They went on that way for quite a while, the woman implying she wouldn't rent to anybody like him, Delmore staying on the step and saying it wasn't worth his while even to go up and have a look at the room. He ended by taking it. Neither of us could have staggered on much further under the burden of his chattels if he hadn't accepted. But a week later he was out of it. "That woman wouldn't stop talking," he said.

He hadn't then discovered barbiturates and alcohol. Insomnia hit him early in his life and brutally. Now he fought it bare-handed and toe-to-toe. But it's never a winning battle that way. And even gentle tippling piles up dangerously in the end. The only thing is to give in, let the beast work its havoc even if it casts its blight over the energy and pleasure of the next day. Hopefully in the course of nature the rhythm of sleep will come back again. And if it doesn't? But Delmore couldn't be patient; he had to force himself into the next day's efforts, even if exhausted and half stupefied from last night's battle. When he later took to sleeping tablets and liquor it wasn't for kicks, but out of grim need. He had tremendous reserves of sheer physical strength. "You're as strong as a horse," a friend used to kid him. But in the long run that strength couldn't hold up against the toll that sleeplessness, and worse still, its remedies, took from him.

I'd known him almost two years now and I didn't know whether or not he was talented, for I'd seen nothing of his writing. Would it have made a difference between us if he weren't talented? Our friendship had already been completely formed. And somehow I always believed, without seeing any direct evidence, that he would be talented. Delmore's disclosure of it to me was in his usual abrupt style of doing things. I was to call on him; but unfortunately I'd just quarreled with a girl and the quarrel was still rankling when I arrived. Delmore, however, was exuberant. He had just typed off the first copy of a story and he thrust it into my hands. I tried to beg off until I was in a better mood to read it fairly; but he was like a child who has presented you a gift and is crushed if you do not unwrap it. The story was "In Dreams Begin Responsibilities." I was in no mood to read anything, but for this particular thunderbolt I was totally unprepared. The friends of youth had thrust manuscripts upon me often enough, and here and there one would encouragingly find glimmerings of talent amid much

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stumbling and awkwardness. But here was something completely formed and wonderfully perfect. None of us had been brought up with any manners to speak of, or I might have had the poise to find some pat words to carry me over my present ill-humor. That would have seemed gush to us; we were supposed to deliver judgments that pretended to be careful and precise. Whatever halting words came out of me must have sounded grudging and churlish—which was in fact my mood—and I could see Delmore's face fall. It took me a long time afterward to explain to him what had happened before I came to reassure him totally about the story.

He was then just twenty-two, and he would never write as good a story again. It's just as well that we live without foresight in some matters. The discovery of his talent didn't alter our friendship, but did add something new to it. Genuine talent is so rare a thing that one has to shield it. Henceforth, from time to time, I would have to play the protective mother hen, though my efforts must have been clumsy and were sometimes grumblingly received.

DELMORE went off to Harvard to do graduate study in philosophy. I went out to Chicago in 1936 on some sort of fellowship, along with Paul Goodman. On vacations and during summers we were together again after our various cross-country movements.

Delmore and Paul were to have a peculiar and violently terminated friendship. I had already introduced them by this time. They were virtually neighbors in Washington Heights, at least whenever Delmore was at home, and I brought him up one afternoon to Paul's apartment. Delmore was his usual polite and attentive self when he was meeting someone new. Paul had been having very bad luck getting published, but he had a great unpublished reputation among us that I'd told Delmore about. Delmore showed the deference one might accord a *cher maître* with an acknowledged *oeuvre* behind him. They hit it off on their first meeting, but they were too oddly assorted a pair to remain friends.

Owl-eyed and baby-faced, Paul Goodman seemed to have slid into life out of some corner of a Chagall painting. Dressed in black, with sidecurls, he could have walked on stage as the young Talmudist, forever precocious and forever *boychik*. He could be lots of fun, though, and in our first year at Chicago I saw very much of him. Paul was also the most abstract, in the sense of detached, person that I think I ever knew. He could discuss his friends with quiet and devastating remoteness. It wasn't malice necessarily, but simply the Talmudist building ingenious and fanciful commentary. Once he began on Delmore, but promptly cut himself short, sensing I wasn't taking to it very well. Delmore was almost as vague on Paul, for different reasons. I think he didn't quite grasp where his relationship with Goodman stood. It was difficult to know if one was at any time really close to Paul.

In our second year at Chicago I saw much less of Goodman. There was no open rupture, we simply went different ways. But with Delmore, friendships weren't usually allowed to fade away so easily. Paul had gathered a curious little circle around himself. Delmore has described it unflatteringly in "The World is a Wedding," which is a dull story, I think, unless you happen to know the people. Nevertheless he enjoyed dropping in on Paul and his circle, and he often did so on summer evenings.

I went with him only once when the circle was in full session, and he was obviously a fish out of water. Delmore, when aroused, was direct and stormy. The style the group had elaborated for itself was understatement, playing it cool. They would have talked from the other side of their mouths had that facial gesture not been too tough-guy and heterosexual. Delmore was deadly serious about literature and his own efforts to write; Paul and his friends affected to be serious about nothing. It was one of the defense mechanisms the Depression had triggered—take everthing as a laugh.

Paul brought out a batch of poems for Delmore, who promptly buried his face in the sheets, while the party chatter went on around him. He had often wondered to me privately about the eccentricity of Paul's verse, but now he chose this foolhardy moment to try to unravel its mystery in the full public glare of the circle. Had Paul perhaps been influenced here by Auden?; there by the deliberately crabbed effects Allen Tate sometimes sought?; or was the deliberate prosiness at this point an echo of William Carlos Williams?; etc., etc. Delmore's tone was very polite and modest, as of a learner seeking the key to a craft that eluded his ear.

Paul took the questioning very solemnly at first. The fact is that he didn't study contemporary poets particularly, whereas Delmore followed them as intently as a stockbroker watching the ups and downs of the market. The questions really were silly in view of Paul's way of writing the poems. On buses, trains, at indifferent moments in a lecture, he brought out the stubby pencil, lifted the small wad of paper from his pocket, and went on from the last line where he had left off. He didn't so much compose poems as squirt them. Imagine a tube of toothpaste with numerous cuts along the sides; you press and it squirts out in all directions in squiggles, whorls, dribbles. So Paul's poems jetted out, innocent of any metrical calculation, left to their own devices somehow to wriggle through the aural canal into the inner ear.

During Delmore's scholarly inquisition the conversation had broken off, the group staring in amazment at anyone so deadly serious about any-

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thing. At length, Paul, more owl-eyed than ever, began to titter. The titter spread and they were all laughing. Delmore flushed, but held his temper. Later, though, walking away, he was fuming. He couldn't stand the idea of being laughed at as ridiculous. One of his poems later was to begin, "Do they whisper behind my back?" and goes on: "Do they laugh at me,/Mimicking my gestures?" It might have been conceived at that moment. Ironically enough, in his later decline Delmore was to throw himself more and more into the role of the ridiculous public clown.

But the break with Goodman came not over the norms of poetry but of sexuality. The Goodman circle divided the world into "heteraceteras" (heterosexuals), the "ambidextrous," and—strange, they had no word of their own for the two *engagé* homosexuals in their midst whose commitment to their special tastes altered their whole way of life. Your options in the whole matter were left open, they were a tolerant circle. But the second represented the *juste moyen* between two unnecessary extremes—the abysmal normality of the first, and the dangerous commitment of the third. They were advance scouts in the Asexual Revolution that has now overtaken us. What finally triggered the final quarrel I didn't hear from Delmore, and of course not from Paul; but I happened in on the *coup de grâce*. I visited Delmore just after he had come back from mailing a letter to Paul, a copy of which he insisted on reading to me. It was short and brutal, and concluded with something like: "No doubt, you will go on as you have been doing, corrupting young boys and turning them into fags like yourself." Delmore was shaking, as if he had just come through an actual scene of violence. He read the letter to me partly to relieve the guilt which always followed his violent acts. But he also felt that he had written out of principle. It wasn't Gay Liberation he was objecting to but Gay Imperialism.

These expressions, of course, don't belong to the period at all, but I think they report what Delmore felt. A few years later, when he had the technical vocabulary, he described Goodman's attitude in Freudian terms. Freud has spoken of the sexuality of the infant as "polymorphous perverse." Paul accepted the polymorphous—any love-object, man, boy, woman, dog, would do quite well —but didn't find it perverse. Instead, it would be a liberation from cramping inhibitions and therefore personally and socially therapeutic. "Unless ye be as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Paul took this literally to include a regression to infantile sexuality. At the time I didn't take this as seriously as Delmore did because I thought it was mostly talk—Paul engaged in his usual fashion in the free play of ideas. In fact, he turned out to be three decades ahead of his time.

So Paul Goodman passed out of our lives into the long travail of the neglected writer, while just about now Delmore was to be launched into the blazing orbit of a career. He had left Harvard without taking his degree because he was now a young man in a hurry, bursting with *the* book he had to get out so that he could then marry *the* girl. And in the optimistic manner of the movies then, this chapter of his life might carry the tag: boy publishes book, boy marries girl.

Appropriately enough, the first story he'd shown me was the first step in his launching. It appeared as the lead piece in the first issue of *Partisan Review* in the fall of 1937, taking precedence over contributors like Wallace Stevens, Edmund Wilson, Lionel Trilling, James Agee. The story attracted much attention, and things were definitely on the rise for him. That it had appeared in that particular magazine at that particular time was also auspicious for him. The arrival of *Partisan Review* on the scene was a big event, particularly for the young, in those days. It marked the first appearance of an independent and literate Left in this country—something which we young people wanted badly to see but couldn't have created all by ourselves. It was particularly welcome to young teachers on campus, where the liberal members of the faculty were usually so thoroughly and subtly Stalinized that they didn't even know it. But what most excited us as young readers was the combination of radical politics and a radical adherence to the great avant-garde movements in modern literature and art. In our good will, our wish for the best of both worlds, we wanted to believe that Marxism—the true Marxism, that is—was thoroughly compatible with the modern literature and art we loved. Compatible? No, more: implied it. For wasn't it perfectly logical that to be radical in politics also implied that one must be radical in art too? It was a lot to believe, but we were young and had the appetite for it, and so awaited each issue of the magazine with hope.

Delmore seemed thus to be in with the right people. He had been received into the circle of the editors and their immediate friends; he liked them, found them interesting and exciting. At the time, it seemed a good thing for him not to be alone, but part of a group, and particularly this group. Philip Rahv, one of the two senior editors of *Partisan Review*, especially began to court him at this time. I remember clearly the first time an invitation to lunch arrived. I was with Delmore before he went off to the restaurant, and began to fuss over his appearance. I didn't know Rahv at all, but the title "Editor" rang formidable echoes in my mind: I imagined some impeccable type gazing across the luncheon table at Delmore's casually assembled clothes. Delmore was a little nettled at me when he got back: "You and your fussing! You should have seen Philip Rahv—"

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I waited for him to find the words: "He looked like the Paris Commune."

This image of Philip must remain forever elusive to me. When I knew him years later, he had long been reading Henry James and acquired enough polish in the process to have faced down any Chairman of the Board. Yet now and then perhaps, even when Philip was being most suave and magisterial, I fancied I caught a gleam of what Delmore must have meant by "the Paris Commune." Philip would have been less charming without that touch.

DELMORE and Gertrude were married that June in a little synagogue in Washington Heights. In a movie this ought to have been the fade-out, and I am sorry that in the actual course of events it should have turned out an anticlimax. There were enough touches of a 30's movie about the ceremony to have satisfied any director of the time: a memento of New York as a city of neighborhoods, the celebration of neighborhood pieties and sentimentalities by all the assembled relatives with their small bickering and contented clucking. I was the only non-family present, and this too was a 30's touch: the single outlander from another neighborhood, the Irish friend from Queens, not Cagney, alas, but perhaps rating a Frank McHugh for casting. But it was Delmore himself who dissolved the fade-out by a telegram a few days later asking me to come up to Vermont, where they were honeymooning. On the way up I expected some extraordinary clash or marital hysteria had arisen; but none such was visible when I arrived, and Delmore never gave any reason for this sudden summons. Probably he was just lonely in the country, and he was more used to having me instead of Gertrude at his side to dispel his loneliness. Still, it wasn't a good omen for the marriage—and so in fact it later turned out.

Delmore's book was now out and had been enthusiastically received. He had acclaim, and from the people whose judgment he valued. In some cases it was extraordinary acclaim; Allen Tate wrote that Delmore's was the "only genuine innovation we've had since Pound and Eliot came upon the scene twenty-five years ago." There was even a letter from T.S. Eliot, which he handled like a sacred relic, reading it to me, not letting me touch it, but showing me the signature as if to guarantee its authenticity. He had honors and awards—two Guggenheim Fellowships, and a job at Harvard forthcoming. Yet when I came East in the summer of 1939, having booked passage for Europe, Delmore pleaded with me not to go. Why just now when he was riding high did he feel this need to bind me closer to himself than ever? Did he have some premonitory fear that he might topple from this high perch on which he'd been placed? Success had come upon him in such a sudden burst that he still felt insecure with it, as if another puff of fortune might blow it away. I wavered between loyalty to my friend and the strong desire to see Europe now while it was still there to be seen. Then he played his trump: "If you wait till next year, we can go together," and I stayed with him. There was to be no next year, of course; Hitler took care of that. When I finally got there it was amid the ravages of war and under the auspices of the U.S. government. Delmore was to die without ever seeing Europe.

We had grown up in the shadow of approaching war. Some of us had lived with the conviction that it would come in one form or another from the moment we first heard Hitler ranting over the radio. And after the fall of 1940 most of the young men I knew were also convinced that America sooner or later would be in the war. The arguments for isolationism might rage throughout the country, but the tide was setting too strongly in the opposite direction. The debate over whether it was "our war" even erupted in the pages of *Partisan Review* and split the editors apart. However the intellectuals might babble, it was to be *our* war soon enough. At that time there was a great deal of talk that it would be long—perhaps another Thirty Years' War. We had grown up under the fatality of a war to come; and now that it was here, it was fated to drag on and take the rest of our life with it.

Yet the next two years (1940-42) were to be the most calm and secure I ever knew Delmore to have. We are now in the easy upland, the shining plateau of success, of his life, and it seemed to stretch so evenly and uneventfully before him that he didn't have to worry about tumbling down from it. I was at Brown in philosophy, and he was teaching freshman English at Harvard. We were able to see a lot of each other, for Cambridge was just a short commute from Providence. He hadn't quarreled with any colleagues yet; he seemed to like them or at least find them interesting in one way or another, and they appeared to make much of him. His academic chores were light, and teaching was a new and enjoyable experience into which he threw himself with enthusiasm. He took a lot of pride, more than he would admit, in being part of Harvard; the small intricacies of academic social life in Cambridge interested and amused him for a while; and he didn't seem to miss too much being away from New York.

The last time I saw him before the war caught me up in its movements and separated us was in the summer of 1942. He and Gertrude had rented a pleasant little house near the Charles river. We sat talking in his study upstairs, with the river sparkling in the near distance, and the mild sun streaming over Delmore's shoulders where he sat near the window. A visitor dropped by, a young man connected with Harvard. The talk was of the war and the draft, and how the lives of people we knew were already being altered by these.

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Delmore was in a jovial mood, and I am glad to fix this phase of our friendship in one final joke. The visitor brought up the sad case of another Harvard teacher who in a burst of patriotism had volunteered for military service and been rejected for a physical defect since childhood that over the years he had come to forget about: one testicle had never completely descended after birth.

Delmore began to laugh. "My only regret is that I have but one testicle to give to my country." Then he was suddenly choking with laughter, "And they turned it down."

On this merry note we may leave him ready to face Hitler and the Axis.

II

AND perhaps there our friendship should have ended.

It had had its passing rough spots and quarrels, and perhaps the infatuation and naiveté of youth hung over it all; but throughout there had been affection, devotion, and lots of fun. In his own peculiar way he was the most magical human being I've known—the adjective is the only appropriate one I can find. What followed was so different that trying to remember him now is like staring at a photograph torn down the middle, the two parts of which do not match. If I were to pray for the repose of his soul, to which of the two would I pray? I'm not sure I can piece them together now. I've lived so long letting the one part die and be buried within me that it pains me already to turn it up and look at it once again.

And yet in the first year after the war when we were seeing each other again our friendship was for me as intense and happy as it had ever been.

When the war ended in 1945 I was one of the lucky ones flown back early from Italy. I checked out with the government in Washington, and came on to New York. From the *Partisan Review* office (he was now an editor), I learned that Delmore was in New York, on leave from Harvard. I wasn't sure how he would greet me. I hadn't seen him for three years. Our correspondence had been desultory, and then dropped off. When two of my letters went unanswered, I too had stopped writing. Perhaps he was angry at me for some unknown reason, or he had something pressing on his mind. Whatever it was, I was determined to have it out with him face to face rather than by telephone or letter. I rang his bell, but no answer. I was just leaving when he came around the corner, the rapid teetering walk unmistakable, and stopped under the streetlight. He had seen me and he stood there, letting me walk toward him.

In retrospect, the image looms up as prophetically macabre: the figure halted under the glare of the streetlight, the face invisible in shadow. At the time, walking toward him, I merely wondered whether he had halted there to turn and walk away. When I got close enough, he was grinning, and his first words were: "Where have you been?"

That night we sat around talking almost till dawn, and now I felt I was really back, and everything between us was what it had always been. But putting things together now, I think he was already a changed man. Several things had happened that left their mark upon him, and his embroilment with these was one of the things that had kept him from writing to me. Gertrude and he had divorced. While the marriage hadn't been what would be conventionally described as a happy one, it had nevertheless given a certain center and cohesiveness to his life. He had never really ceased to love her; and when she was gone, there was the loneliness that Delmore never liked and that the numbers of women on the wing only made more acute afterward. The other, and for him probably graver, blow was the disastrous reception of his second book, *Genesis,* when it came out in 1943. His first book had launched him; his second, which he expected to solidify his position, nearly undid it. I was away all that time, but a friend who saw much of him during that period thinks to this day that Delmore never really recovered from the fate of that book. I am inclined now to agree. For one thing, Delmore never talked to me about it in the years from 1945 onward. Since he talked about almost everything else under the sun, this particular omission must have been because the experience had been so painful that he had desperately to keep it buried.

And now too he would often talk about Scott Fitzgerald. In the pre-war years Fitzgerald had never been one of his special writers; when he made mention of him, it was usually casual and in passing. Now Fitzgerald, and Fitzgerald's saying that "in American lives there are no second acts," ran as a recurrent refrain through Delmore's conversation. And the identification with Fitzgerald had pushed into another area—drinking. In the summer of 1941 the three of us—Gertrude, he, and I—would sometimes of an evening take a long stroll down to Harvard Square, and if there was nothing else doing, end at—yes, a drugstore, drinking ice-cream sodas. Now, this first night back, I was sitting talking with Delmore at a bar—that was something new between us. I had learned to do a little drinking during the war, but that was on occasions; Delmore had been driven to drinking under the whip of more necessitous demons.

At the time I didn't notice any of these things; or rather, didn't put them together, I was too overjoyed in being back with my friend. There was also the particular exhilaration of the postwar years. We were free from the war, and I personally had freed myself for the time being from the academic world simply to exist in this blissful limbo. An extraordinary sense of security and power pervaded the nation, for we had come through the war intact and strong. We didn't even

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have to worry about the ugly specter of the atomic bomb; we were the only ones who had it, and of course we would never misuse it.

It was against that background of euphoria that I was taking up my friendship again with Delmore. I myself joined the staff of *Partisan Review* in the fall of 1945, and henceforth the course of our friendship became inseparably entangled with the affairs of that magazine. William Phillips and Philip Rahv, the original founders, continued as editors; Delmore and I were associates. An informal and close little family—and of course, like every family, with its own particular tensions. My wife was away for two months, and I was now eating dinner regularly with Delmore, just like old times. But it turned out not to be just like old times, something new had been added. "There must be something wrong with them," Philip Rahv grumbled, "They eat together every night." William defended us with the obvious: "Why not? It's boring to eat alone." But common sense, as I found out, wasn't always taken at its face value in this milieu I had entered. In the old days there had been a careless privacy to our friendship; now there might always be someone looking over your shoulder for possible motives. Freud was very much in the air, to be used for whatever purposes suited the moment.

In fact, we didn't always eat alone. Delmore was keeping company with Elizabeth Pollet, and from time to time the three of us had dinner together. I liked Elizabeth very much, and thought she was good for Delmore; and since he was being reluctantly forced toward the idea of a new marriage as the only protection against his gnawing loneliness, I hoped his choice would light on her. Meanwhile he was enjoying things as they were, and he could let the matter drift.

But in a few months he would have to return to Cambridge, and he dreaded the idea. This was another grave change from three years earlier. He had once felt secure and at ease at Harvard, but it now loomed before him as a place of exile from New York. He had quarreled with some influential people there and he felt isolated from the other faculty. Teaching had once been an enthusiasm, or at worst he had taken it matter-of-factly in his stride. Now it seemed a lifeless chore. In his depressed moods, he would simply come to class, tell the students to read, and sit there in silence. He tried to keep the thought out of his mind—departure was still months away; but then two months, one, and finally a matter of days.

And then he was gone; and with the return to Cambridge begins a series of incidents—small at first, but ominously mounting in intensity—that foreshadow his decline.

He had hardly been back when I got a telegram that his furnace was broken and would I please come up. I didn't know anything about furnaces, but I could sit with him in the cold until the repair man came. Thereafter the requests were without excuses, and he didn't need any, for it was fun to be there with him. He had the top half of a large house, and there was plenty of room. Over the years he had had many visitors, either staying with him or passing through: Robert Lowell and his then wife Jean Stafford, Auden, Dwight Macdonald, Fred Dupee, and others. But when the guests, the anecdotes, and the gaiety were gone, solitude became more crushing. Then he wired me to come up, or dashed off to New York. His life was becoming a shuttle between New York and Cambridge.

Months later—I can't fix the date, but it was his last year at Harvard—I got a letter from him denouncing me and declaring our friendship over. It came absolutely out of the blue, there had been no quarrel, and the letter itself was vague as to any particulars beyond my "monstrous character" —the details of that too unspecified. I was distraught, and went off to William Phillips for consolation and wisdom, as we often did in such situations. I know now that William already grasped more of Delmore's grave state than I could imagine, but out of sensitivity to me kept his tongue in check. A few minutes after I was back home from William's the bell rang, and there was Delmore unexpectedly arrived from Cambridge grinning at me. I was too astounded to mention the letter, and he said nothing. Now I deliberately watched and waited through our conversation, but he never mentioned it. He appeared to have forgotten it entirely. His erratic behavior had now reached a new stage: it was no longer sequential. What he might do in a momentary fit of rage had no relation to what preceded it and disappeared from his mind after the doing.

He had more or less decided by this time that he wanted to marry Elizabeth; but he had hung back too long, and she found another man. My bell rang one morning, and there was Elizabeth, frightened and gasping for breath, stammering that Delmore had arrived unexpectedly, and was at her apartment. He was violent, delivering all kinds of threats, and he would have kept her from leaving except that she had crawled down the fire escape. (He had not struck her, only raved madly; Delmore never went in for physical, only emotional, violence.) I rushed over, and he quieted down when I came in. We spent the afternoon together, and I put him on the plane back to Boston, telling him I'd come up as soon as I could. He was quietly drunk by this time; it's the only time I can remember when I abetted him in his drinking.

He resigned himself to the loss of Elizabeth, but was drinking more. When he next came to New York, it was to deliver a lecture at Columbia. There seemed a possibility he might get a job

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there, and he wanted desperately to leave Cambridge. He arrived several days early, but had no lecture ready and was generally in bad shape. I got a typewriter into his hotel room, and volunteered to sit and type at his dictation. He would start a few sentences, flounder, go blank. I would prod him: Do you mean this? Can you say that? And he would flounder on a few paces more, and then the process would be repeated. Somehow we finished it, but I don't think it could have been a good lecture.

This incident sticks out so strongly in my mind because Delmore had always had a tremendous facility. He could bat out a review or essay, once its main lines were fixed in his mind, at a sitting. Now that the facility was gone, he grew panicky. The thought of failing powers was beginning to be with him constantly. He would quote the lines from Chekhov—*Uncle Vanya*, is it?—where the aging character claps his head, and exclaims: "My God, I'm forgetting simple words. Am I losing my mind?" The years of barbiturates and alcohol must be taking their toll. His final breakdown, besides its emotional roots, may have had a physiological basis in sheer brain damage.

He didn't get the job at Columbia, but left Harvard anyway. His return to New York, however, did not save him; instead it was the beginning of a descent into the maelstrom, in which I was nearly drowned with him.

IN THE normal course of things the very close friendships of youth are bound to change. The two people grow up, they enter different ways of life, and they too become different in the process. The friendship may remain, but it has to alter. History does not record what Damon and Pythias became to each other in later life. But certainly their friendship would have been severely taxed if they had been on the staff of *Partisan Review* together. I'm not referring to the individual personalities of the editors, but to something that might be called the *PR* circle, or even the *PR* world, especially as it was in the late 40's. There were a great number of talented people in the offing—contributors, ex-contributors, anti-contributors, or people generally on the fringe where this and other circles overlapped, for the different groups were not then hermetically sealed off from one another. Bring a number of talented people together in a close area, and the neurotic tremors begin vibrating. Nobody seems to have devised a way of building an intellectual and literary circle without adding immeasurably to the usual stock of nastiness, bitchery, and backbiting that are the lot of human nature. Perhaps that's the price humanity has to pay for the centers that generate ideas. Older cultures seem to take these unpleasant facts in their stride and at least maintain the formal gestures of civility. Americans, who have less of a tradition of the salon or literary circle, fling themselves at the business with greater innocence—and violence. It was not exactly an atmosphere to bring Delmore further peace.

As the influence of Marx diminished in the late 40's, the figure of Freud loomed larger. We were perhaps the first generation in America to take Freud and psychoanalysis seriously. The 20's, so far as I can gather from my reading, took him along with D. H. Lawrence as an invitation to "throw off your inhibitions." We, on the contrary, faced the matter of psychoanalysis with intellectual solemnity. If you could dig up the money, you had a moral duty to face yourself in psychoanalysis, and you were shirking if you didn't. Those, at any rate, were the lines along which Delmore tried to persuade Philip Rahv to be analyzed. Delmore was being a little impish, no doubt; for it's hard to imagine the formidable personality that was Philip's giving itself into the hands of an analyst. William Phillips told Delmore that he was wasting his time. "There wouldn't be any point in Philip's being analyzed. Most of us in analysis break down after a time and admit some of our faults. Philip would break down and confess he's a great man."

The question of art and neurosis was one of the chief topics of the magazine in those days. I feel less benign toward neurosis nowadays, partly as a result of Delmore's case. But the question still seems to me a central one, not only for art but for the roots of modern civilization as a whole. It is also a theme that has been disfigured and melodramatized by later decades, and perhaps Delmore's case might be a good one with which to reopen the question.

Freud was a disaster for Delmore. It has often been pointed out that one danger of Freudian therapy, particularly in the wrong hands, is that it can turn the patient's attention away from his current life problems and fix it on the years of childhood. Delmore's self-absorption was such that his mind was already excessively riveted in his own "family romance" of childhood. He had picked up the collected works of Freud at a Cambridge bookshop, and as he pored relentlessly over their pages, he was absorbed more and more into his own diagnosis of his childhood. He had also gathered an elaborate conceptual armor through which it became harder to break. Later, when he did go to an analyst, he came away from a session once and crowed to William and me that he had spent the whole fifty minutes arguing theory with the doctor and the latter finally conceded Delmore was right. Afterward, William commented sadly: "Delmore is crazy; he pays money to teach the analyst his business."

Meanwhile Elizabeth had reappeared. She was still in love with Delmore, but feared his violence and avoided seeing him. I became an emissary between them; I would assure her that Delmore was getting better, that he was now less stormy and violent, while with him I would urge caution

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and restraint. Delmore was making efforts, but I wasn't convinced that he could hold his calm. One afternoon we were sitting in Washington Square when he suddenly leaped to his feet and started berating me: "We live in the world of Hitler and Stalin, and you want to be gentle!" His chest was heaving, his nostrils quivering, almost as if he were physically choking in his frustration. It might have been better if Delmore had gone in for physical violence as a release; in the long run it is probably less damaging to oneself and to those closest to one than his particular kind of emotional violence.

Nevertheless, he kept to my restraining advice with regard to Elizabeth, and now they were together again. I felt I wasn't so needed, and might withdraw a little. I was at that time a pretty feeble reed myself, and in no way fitted to be a pillar of strength for anybody. But this peaceful withdrawal was not to be. I've recently met Elizabeth again after all these years, and I'm glad our friendship remains: "Delmore asked too much of you," was her brief summary of that period. Yet it was not the "too much," but the kind of thing asked that I couldn't give any more. We began to quarrel. We had quarreled enough in the past, God knows, but the quarrels quickly joined were as quickly blown over. But now the quarrels left a bitter taste.

Delmore had become the play-actor of his own neurosis, he had begun to melodramatize his evil. *The Brothers Karamazov* was one of his favorite books, and he used to say of Dostoevsky, "Just think, he himself was all three brothers at once." I think Delmore had come to aspire after being the three himself: Alyosha, the spiritual; Mitya, the violent; Ivan, the intellectual and destructive one. But the family doesn't stop there. Old Karamazov, the father who begot them, the self-dramatizing buffoon, is in his own way all three sons at once. And Delmore, in his abusing and self-abusive tirades, began to resemble him more than any of the three younger and grander figures.

The tawdry details of our final break-up don't matter at this late date. The ending of a personal relationship is rarely a grand exit in the style of opera; usually it's a squalid anticlimax disfiguring everything that may have been splendid in the friendship. This one took place under the implacable heat of a New York summer, Dostoevsky unspoken but in the air, and madness lurking in ambush. Delmore's self-destructiveness insisted on being destructive of me. I remember his eyes, always so expressive, gloating now in self-recrimination for his own evil, and sucking me into it with him. I couldn't take it any more, and walked out. And so walked away from a good part of my life.

The decade of the 40's—with its particular promises and hopes—had already passed; and now our friendship was down the drain after it.

III

And so we were no longer friends. We said hello when we met, exchanged brief and civil remarks, attended some last editorial meetings together. It may seem silly, in view of our past friendship, to have kept our relations on so formal a footing; and there were times when our conversations were protracted a few minutes, and I was tempted to continue; but I was afraid Delmore might swarm all over me again in his possessiveness, and I drew back. As soon as my friendship with him had broken, it was a foregone conclusion that I would leave *Partisan Review*—the interest and energy I had to give had also waned for other reasons. I don't even exactly know the last issue in which my name appeared on the masthead, and I haven't looked back to check.

Delmore and Elizabeth, now married, had moved to the country somewhere in New Jersey. I think—judging from a few of his later poems and from Elizabeth's remarks—that the country was good for him, and he found there as much happiness as he could expect. But he was also tortured, obsessed more and more by the fear that he was losing his mind. The consumption of pills and liquor was increasing. Elizabeth was now living in fear, and she finally fled. They were divorced; and Delmore, now left on his own, reappeared in the city. I ran into him a few rare times—I was now walking through different streets, it seems—in the Village. We greeted each other—a wave of the hand, hello, and that was all. He was looking seedier now. I heard vague reports of how he had become a barroom raconteur at the White Horse tavern, willing to tell stories to anyone who would stand him a drink; how he was living from pillar to post, from one cheap hotel room to another, or from one to another apartment of anonymous girls who took him in as a stray. But nothing definite from anyone who was seeing him regularly or knew him from the past. Then one day I ran into William Phillips, who had recently seen him, and heard the alarming news that Delmore had crossed the line of sanity and was hearing voices. For a moment there flashed before my mind the image of Delmore once again caught up in the buffoonery of his illness, dramatizing his symptoms in mockery of himself and others, but somehow surviving indestructible underneath it all. No, William said, this was real; and as we were walking, he pointed toward the steeple of the Empire State building: "He says the voices come from there." You play out a role long enough and desperately enough, you tell yourself it isn't quite real, you believe yourself telling yourself you are only playing, and there comes the moment when you have already crossed the invisible line and the role takes you over.

A few years later came the sudden news of his

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death—alone, of a heart attack, in a cheap hotel room. My first feeling was one of relief that he was at last released from his torment.

Now that he is dead the legend of the *poète maudit*—the doomed and sacrificial poet—has already claimed him. And before we submit to the distortions that current sentimentalities are likely to inject into this kind of legend, we had better attempt a cooler glimpse at the work he has left. It may, surprisingly enough, provide some strong imperatives to revise our stock notions of the alienation of poetry and the poet today.

Delmore had a beautiful lyrical talent, and so long as he continued able to write anything at all, this gift doesn't seem to have left him. It's too early to say what in our period, if anything, will be lasting; but my own judgment, perhaps partial, is that some of his lyrics will survive. But the great triumphs of modern poetry were nearly all in the lyric, and he wanted to help restore verse as a narrative medium. He admired Hardy's *Dynasts,* for example, before it became fashionable among some circles. But where Hardy had dealt with the fate of nations and empires, and the broad sweep of history, Delmore chose a very personal subject matter as the material for his own major narrative effort.

This work is *Genesis,* and in abstract the design of it does not look too unpromising. It's the story of the growing up of a Jewish boy (Delmore himself), of how his forebears came to this country, the strife of the parents and how it is inflicted as a trauma upon the boy. The narrative would be carried by the prose, but a rather cadenced and rhythmic prose that wouldn't be too glaring a contrast to its verse accompaniment. The latter would take the form of a poetic comment and explication of the narrative in the manner of a Greek chorus. Not bad as an idea, though the material is conventional: another version of the archetypal Making of an American. But the execution of the design fails badly. When I first read *Genesis* I was away from Delmore during the war, and I was disappointed by it as most of its readers were; but such was my faith in his powers that I imagined it a temporary stop and regrouping, the working-out of material that he had to get rid of, before he went on to the next stage. I have just reread it, with a greater effort at objectivity, and I am shocked at how bad it is. The subject matter is so intensely self-centered that it could have been better expressed lyrically, and so small in its actual narrative content that it might have been done in a short story. The verse is heavy and lumpy, lighted only occasionally by some lyrical gleams; the prose sections that carry the narrative are so drawn out that they become flat and monotonous. How could Delmore, so acutely perceptive as he then was, not have grasped one simple and central fact about this work: that it dragged and was dull? The only answer seems to be that he was so hypnotized by its personal subject matter—the history of his own childhood—that he became trapped in his narcissism and could not detach himself enough to judge the work as a piece of writing.

In fiction, he produced one perfect story, which —significantly enough—uses a kind of surrogate lyrical form to express his inveterate family material. Two other stories are notable, but not at the same level. For the rest, he falls off into the self-complacency of the raconteur retailing anecdotes. The flatness of style, originally deliberate, becomes monotonous because it is a dodge—an evasion of the requirement that an author imaginatively project his characters before us. The raconteur assumes we all know the people he's gossiping about, and imagination in consequence becomes indolent.

He had great brilliance and potential, I believe, as a critic. His early pieces give very alert and sensitive readings of Hardy, Auden, Tate, and others. He was starting from Eliot as a base, but his young man's mind was swarming with ideas, and he was working toward a position and point of view of his own. But the patience and concentration needed for this were denied him—for a number of reasons, principally perhaps his own mental troubles. A few of his essays, as I knew personally, were produced under such stress that it's a wonder he could get them out as coherently as he did. Moreover, he tended to look on his own literary criticism as a *parergon*, an effort incidental to his main business of poetry. He once joked to me about the laboriousness with which Philip Rahv carved out his essays: "You've got to remember that English is still a foreign language for Philip." But Delmore's facility hasn't served him so well. Philip's essays stand up, rounded off and complete in their own terms; Delmore's provide us brilliant flashes.

When you add it all up, what have you? Certainly, not something at all negligible. To have written anything, however fragmentary, that lays claim to permanence is a higher achievement than to turn out something fully formed but glittering only for the moment. But just as certainly, a failure—and a failure all the more in relation to the power of the original gifts. It is that human failure that currently invokes the facile image of the *poète maudit*—the poet exiled and accursed by the tribe.

Delmore's case is thus assimilated to the suicides of Sylvia Plath and John Berryman (who, as it happens, dedicated his *Dream Songs* "to the sacred memory of Delmore Schwartz"). They are sacrificial victims—whether to the cruel Muse or to that usual scapegoat, Society, is not often clear. A. Alvarez, speaking of Sylvia Plath, actually says that her death was not suicide but murder--in this case, implying that she was slain by Poetry itself, a rather strange allegation of an abstrac-

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tion's being an actual murderer. Dwight Macdonald attributes the cause to society, but in a peculiarly vague way. He compares Delmore's situation with Poe's a century earlier, and he cites an eloquent paragraph from Baudelaire about the solitude and isolation of Poe in 19th-century America. With all due respect to Macdonald, the comparison with Poe is downright foolish. Delmore had recognition, grants, sinecures; and in his last years he was given a position at a university when he was in a condition where anyone else would normally have been considered unemployable—the exception being made because of his eminence as a poet. In somewhat the same vein as Dwight Macdonald runs the blurb on the back of Delmore's *Selected Poems,* and its language is worth noting: "Delmore Schwartz acted out in his life . . . the alienation of the poet from our society." One has to ask just exactly what it would mean to "act out the alienation of the poet from society." I can only imagine a poet living alone and unknown, far from the center of things, whose manuscripts are discovered after his death. Delmore, however, had to be at the turbulent center of things, involved in a literary review where all the jangling wires of human intercourse got crossed, whereas the gentler "alienation" of a Wallace Stevens or William Carlos Williams might have benefited him and allowed him more time for his poetry. And he himself has already rejected these glib interpretations: in a lecture in 1956 when he delivered a blast against Allen Ginsberg and the Beat poets for their facile howl of alienation—an alienation which, as is quite inevitable in the course of modern society, had immediately become the *in* thing.

"I cultivate my hysteria," said Baudelaire, the spiritual father of the *poètes maudits.* It was a dangerous and a foolish thing to say. You don't cultivate your neurosis, it cultivates you—as the parasite cultivates and saps its parent host. With some significant modern artists neurosis has perhaps shaped their vision, but in doing so has also cramped and warped it. Baudelaire's own work suffered: the *nostalgie de la boue* makes the aspirations toward the spiritual life that much more unreal, distant and tenuous, and theatrical. When Tolstoy inveighs against Baudelaire, he is overemphatic as is his manner, but modern culture had better return to hearken to him. But however matters may lie in the perennial question of art and neurosis, the overwhelming lesson in Delmore's case is that the sickness impeded and ultimately destroyed the talent.

Macdonald does make a concession: "granting that . . . psychological difficulties were also important." In the post-Freud era this "granting" and "also" are really precious. The troubles of Delmore and Berryman (whom I knew for a while moderately well), and from my reading I would say Plath, were so obviously deep-seated in the personality that neither of those abstract specters, Society or Poetry, can be invoked as culprits. Berryman, when I knew him, was a meticulous enough person to have worked as a clerk or junior executive; he would have ended as an alcoholic nonetheless. And if Delmore had had another occupation, he would have had comparable difficulties to those he had.

One can construct the scenario of explanation for him that one wants. The materials for it are abundant and obvious enough. The violent split between father and mother; the father whom he admired as a hero and a pleasant companion, only to hear constantly vilified when he was back with his mother; and the constant closeness of his relation to the mother, who did everything she could to prolong his narcissism, exaggerate his ego with praise, and yet in her clever and poisonous way insinuate in the child, then the boy, and then the young man, that the love and trust of anybody was not to be believed.

But I offer no explanation. Before the human heart our explanations seem to fall short. Despite his absorption in Freud, Delmore would have liked the final word about himself to be spoken from the region that Dostoevksy inhabits. I simply report a conversation we had one afternoon in 1941 when I had come in from Providence to visit him over the weekend. Occasionally he liked to hear whatever I might be doing in class, partly to keep friendly tabs on me, partly to pick up something possibly for his own edification. I had been teaching Leibniz and somehow got into the problem of Predestination and Free Will. Students, however secular-minded they pretend to be, always go for this question, intrigued by its logical niceties. Egged on by them, and also out of my own curiosity, I had researched the question back through the medievals to the drastic passage in Paul, Romans IX, where he speaks of the Potter who, for reasons of His own, shapes some to be vessels of grace, and others to be "vessels of wrath." The last phrase caught Delmore's attention; he begged me to go on, and eventually flung himself passionately into the discussion. The point not to be forgotten—as well as the thorn in the side of all the philosophic commentators—is that these latter vessels retain their freedom throughout. They were created *to be* "vessels of wrath," but all along the way of that "to be" they conspire to make themselves such, their own will thus sealing their damnation. In their wrath they will themselves wrathfully; they cannot help willing in this way, but this "cannot help" is in turn the act of their own will affirming itself desperately and defiantly. The conversation evidently made a deep impression upon Delmore. When I came back next weekend he had written a sonnet about it, one of those prosaic ones he wrote from time to time both as an exercise in versification and to document some

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thought or experience he felt worth preserving for future use. "Yes," he said quietly, "I'm such a 'vessel of wrath.'" It was he who made the personal application; I hadn't even thought about that until he spoke.

I DID see him and speak with him one last time, and I have kept this now to the end. It was in a Village restaurant. I'd come with some friends, husband and wife, passing through from the Midwest, who had never been members of any New York circle. When we sat down, I saw Delmore across the room with a girl whom I didn't know. There came the ritual of the nod and the wave of the hand, but somehow this didn't seem enough now. Time had passed (this was 1961) and the memories of emotional violence had receded; I felt some more friendly or at least civilized gesture was called for. I went over to his table, said hello, and we talked rather pleasantly for a few minutes. He didn't bother to introduce the girl. When they had finished dinner and were on the way out, I invited him and the girl to sit down with us for a brandy. For a while he spoke quietly, and then there burst forth a Delmore I'd never seen or heard, not even in his most agitated moments. He started to rant and rave. I'd always been able to follow the acute zigs and zags of his talk without any effort, but this time I found him incoherent, and his voice raucous in a way I'd never heard it. He meant to be friendly, he wasn't ranting at me but *toward* me—toward me and against the world. Every so often the tones of our past friendship would emerge, waver haltingly for a moment, and then be quickly swallowed back into the wrathful and incoherent bellow. I did what I could by way of flattery and cajolery to make him feel better, but there was no moderating his torrent. The girl kept plucking his arm to leave, and at length he yielded.

Our waiter came running over: "I guess you'll want another brandy after that." Delmore's voice —yells, grunts, groans—had filled the place. Feeling shaken and drained, I gulped a double brandy; the effect was to relax me suddenly, and I burst into tears. I was embarrassing my friends, I knew, but they waited patiently for me to subside. At length the wife, a kindly but also matter-of-fact person, spoke out: "Don't take on so. There's nothing to be done. He's beyond salvaging." The voice of reason submitting to inexorable fact. There crossed my mind the ancient story of the father weeping for a dead child. A Stoic philosopher, passing by, tells the father: "Why do you weep? It is irrational. Your weeping will not bring him back to life." The father replies, "That is why I weep, because it cannot bring him back." I looked across the table at the open, clear, and uncomplicated face that had spoken, and thought: Yes, that is why I weep, because he cannot be salvaged.

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Ethnicity and the Schools

Nathan Glazer

IT IS NOT EASY to find the words that would accurately describe the current wave of ethnic feeling which seems now to be sweeping over America. Even the word "wave" may strike some as exaggerated. We live in a world in which the interplay among mass media, scholars, foundations, and the general public is so subtle and rapid that we are often left confused as to what is "really" happening. Thus, we know that the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations are funding a number of projects in the field of ethnicity. Some are research-oriented, some are oriented toward community action, some are oriented toward directing preexisting bodies of ethnic sentiment into a liberal political direction. In making these grants, are the great foundations responding to a sense of neglect in ethnic communities (or those claiming to speak for them) who have seen so much foundation money going in the past ten years to black and other colored minority groups? Are those grants activated by the fear of an anti-black backlash among working-class whites, and the hope of heading it off? Or are the new projects the creation of scholars and organizers who, at a moment when urban studies are down on the foundation market, and black studies are increasingly limited to blacks, see in ethnic studies a possible new frontier of expansion?

Obviously these and other cynical explanations will continue to suggest themselves so long as we have no very solid empirical understanding of just *what* the ethnic resurgence amounts to. We look at a book like *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* by Michael Novak—a liberal Catholic intellectual of Slovak origin to whom ethnicity has assumed an enormous new importance—and we wonder how representative it is of the feelings of other Catholic intellectuals, and whether it reflects in any way what ordinary Americans of Slovak origin are feeling.

One of the reasons it is so difficult to answer such questions is that the meanings of ethnicity have become so various. We are not dealing here, for example, with a mass immigration of very distinct ethnic types who have no doubt as to their identity. Blacks, Jews, Puerto Ricans, and Mexican-Americans have a sharply defined sense of identity, but for most other Americans ethnic identity is mixed and unclear. There are those Americans who have no ethnic identity at all, there are those whose ethnic identity is largely symbolic or latent (Germans? Scots-Irish?), there are those whose identities are strong but not sustained by organizational ties (Italians?), and those whose identities are weak but are so sustained (assimilated Jews?). No wonder we are at a loss in describing the present situation and projecting even slightly into the future.

Nevertheless, I think we can take as given the fact that ethnic feelings which not so long ago were dormant or latent or altogether nonexistent have in recent years become more evident, more urgent. Even if this has been stimulated or overstimulated by the mass media, the foundations, and the remaining caretakers of ethnic interests delighted to cash in on a slight movement in the chart of ethnic feeling by immediately labeling it a substantial rise, it remains a fact. Taking this fact as given, then, I want to raise two sets of questions about it. First, is it honest? That is to say, is it a cover for racism, a justification for anti-black prejudice, or even (more benignly) a defensive reaction to black pride? There are other ways of being dishonest. Is the new ethnic assertiveness deeply felt? Is it simply fashionable or faddish or a grab for funds and other benefits? Second, what does the new ethnicity mean for the relations among the different groups in America, and for the future of the country? Does it mean more prejudice and more conflict? Does it threaten a balkanized nation, neighborhoods, schools? And if so, how are we to avoid the worst of these consequences?

SEVEN or eight years ago, when Martin Luther King marched in Chicago and Father Groppi marched in Milwaukee, both in largely working-class, low-income, white-ethnic areas, they were met with screams and posters declaring: "We want to save our homes," or "Get out of our neighborhoods." It was incidents like these that raised the question of honesty in connection with

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the new ethnic feelings. For what was there in the Polish or Lithuanian or Italian group and its culture that could justify such behavior? Most liberals answered, nothing. Just as the South had said it was protecting its culture in resisting desegregation, so was something similar now being said in the North, and for exactly the same reason: racism. In any case, how much Polish or Lithuanian or Italian culture actually existed in these areas? Who read Mickiewicz or Dante there? And if there was no real commitment to Mickiewicz or Dante, how could one pretend that those opposing black entry into their neighborhoods were fighting to maintain a culture?

Yet the word culture cannot be restricted only to the arts. It also means the way of life, the customs, the language—or if the language goes, the accent—the food, the stores, the weddings, the knowledge of how to approach a person on the street or how to address someone, and the comfortable expectation that one will oneself be approached and addressed in the same way. A known and experienced way of life is always of value to those who have been raised in it, and a reflexive effort to defend it demands at the least sympathy and understanding, if not necessarily acquiescence. It is true that any value may be inferior to any other and the Lithuanian neighborhood may have to go if another group is to have justice. But we cannot determine that in advance, and it is worth taking the initial claim seriously and sympathetically.

Those who believed that the new ethnicity was merely a cover for racism, however, advanced another argument. If, they said, the opposition in these neighborhoods to various forms of black entry were based on a desire to defend the ethnic culture, we would expect to find as much opposition to the entry of other ethnic groups. Yet those very areas in Chicago and Milwaukee that fought against King and Groppi were mixed. Lithuanians or Poles may have predominated in one or another neighborhood, but there were also Italians and Germans. Similarly, if we look at Canarsie in New York, where some years after the King and Groppi marches, a boycott was staged against the busing-in of more black students, we find that the opposing whites were not all members of a single ethnic group protecting its own way of life, but of two ethnic groups with very different ways of life—Jews and Italians. Surely, then, what we are dealing with here is white racism, pure and simple.

Once again—and without denying that racism played some part in these conflicts, though it is impossible to say how much or even how to determine how much—I think this is an inadequate explanation. For the truth is that certain forms of traditional behavior may be found among many ethnic groups, but not among all. Thus the kind of culture that was characterized by a strong position for the father, the obedience of the children and the following by them of paternal occupations, the consequent rebellion of some against both the requirements of obedience and the insistence on respect for the parents' way of life and the father's occupation—this kind of culture was much better domiciled among the East European white ethnic groups than it was among American blacks or among Puerto Ricans and Mexican-Americans. Consequently, the culture of the Poles or of the Jews, for example, has not been seen by, say, the Italians to be as great a threat to their own culture as the culture of the blacks or Puerto Ricans whose traditions in many respects ran in almost the opposite direction. Against this threat the white ethnics have attempted to fight.

One problem with their effort, and indeed with any effort to defend the values of an ethnic culture in America, is that we do not in this country have an ideology and a rhetoric to justify such action. We do, on the contrary, have an ideology—the ideology of the melting pot—which justifies surrendering one's distinctive cultural traits, and assimilating to a common culture. This position has held sway in America for a very long time, but there are many indications that it is now crumbling. Consider, for example, that it was once axiomatic that all immigrants should be forced to learn the English language. Today a knowledge of English is still required for citizenship, but in New York State, at any rate, it is now possible to vote without demonstrating capacity in English. Bilingual education receives federal support. Whatever the future of Spanish will be, it already has a status very different from that of any earlier immigrant language.

Another aspect of this process of "Americanization" was the insistence that foreign loyalties be subordinated to American loyalties, or rooted out. This demand rings very hollow at a time when no one seems to know what *American* loyalties are any more. After what has happened to American patriotism in the last ten years, when our best educated youth paraded with Cuban or North Vietnamese flags, on what grounds can anyone be upset if Jews demand support for Israel, Irish for Ireland, Greeks for Greece? (And, indeed, when anyone does get seriously upset, it is usually because he opposes the political implications of such demands and not because they are demands in favor of foreign countries.)

But if the model of the melting pot and the rhetoric of Americanization are gone, we are still not very clear as to what will take their place, and this is perhaps why we are all in such confusion over ethnicity. Just as a simple "Americanization" has been rejected (even by the Congress of the United States, as we see from all the recent legislation supporting bilingual education, ethnic studies, and the like), so, too, we are presumably rejecting a simple "separatism."

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Between the two are the misty reaches of "cultural pluralism." Cultural pluralism was never a widely accepted ideology in America. Its biggest moment came in World War II, when, because so many nations had been overrun by Hitler, it seemed that America could be strengthened most not by insisting that everyone forget his national origins, but rather that everyone (except, of course, the Germans) remember them. But cultural pluralism more or less disappeared after World War II, and it was only in the past few years that it began to be revived. If the people fighting King in Chicago and Groppi in Milwaukee had been able to lean on the ideology and rhetoric of cultural pluralism, they would have been able to explain themselves better and to defend themselves more effectively against the charge of racism. Instead, many of them threw up their hands in despairing frustration at their inability to give sophisticated voice to their feelings and said, "Very well, then, we are racists."

YET even if the "pluralist" position of the white ethnic groups is not simply racism, or a cover for racism, the question of its honesty in another sense—the sense of depth or authenticity—still arises. Many spokesmen for the blacks and the Spanish-speaking groups doubt the sincerity of the white demand for special recognition of ethnic background, seeing it not as a cover for racism so much as a kind of "me-tooism" and a grab for federal and foundation funds. Where education is concerned, for example, many in the black and Spanish-speaking communities feel that they are more truly deprived than the white ethnic groups and that they therefore have a more solidly established right to an education which acknowledges their special cultural distinctiveness and which raises their group consciousness. The blacks point out that they were brought here as slaves, and the Spanish-speaking (Mexican or Puerto Rican) point out that they were conquered, whereas the white ethnic groups came as free immigrants. The blacks also say that their own culture was subjected to almost total destruction, whereas the white immigrants were allowed, if they wished, to maintain theirs—in churches, in afternoon schools, in parochial schools—and far from being forcibly deprived, voluntarily chose to assimilate.

I think there is a good deal of weight in the view that blacks and Hispanics (and American Indians) have a larger moral claim on American society than the white ethnic groups. At the same time, we should not exaggerate its weight. Many blacks, after all, were also free immigrants, from the West Indies and elsewhere. Most Mexican-Americans were free immigrants or the descendants of free immigrants, and all Puerto Ricans voluntarily chose to enter an English-speaking environment. And if the argument is that the black and Spanish-speaking immigrants were forced to migrate for economic reasons, so were the immigrant ancestors of the present-day European ethnic groups.

The fact is that we cannot separate ethnic and racial groups into two classes: those who have suffered, economically and culturally, in America, and therefore deserve redress, and those who have not. Perhaps at the extremes we might make such a distinction, but each group's history is so special that no such broad separation makes sense. Consider the Asian-Americans—Chinese and Japanese. They are neither European nor white; they did not come as slaves; they were not conquered; they did suffer race prejudice and, in the case of the Japanese-Americans during World War II, confiscation of their property and even incarceration; they do well economically and their children do well in school. To which class of immigrant groups do they belong?

In considering this question, we are brought to a more powerful argument that gives special weight to black and Spanish-speaking claims where education is concerned as against white-ethnic claims. This is the pragmatic argument that as a matter of fact black and Spanish-speaking children do poorly in school, and for that reason alone some special attention in the form of ethnic-studies programs is required. If the first claim is based on a past deprivation, the second is based on a present deprivation.

But since this is a pragmatic argument, there are pragmatic questions. Do ethnic studies actually help students do better in school? There are many reasons why they might, but none is decisive. According to one argument, the present curriculum is alien to the black or Mexican-American or Puerto Rican child, and because he cannot "relate" to it, he does poorly. But would an ethnically oriented curriculum be more effective in bringing the black or Spanish-speaking child to competence in what we may call the general curriculum (sometimes and improperly called the "white" or "middle-class" curriculum—improperly, because the ability to read and calculate is a general human need, not based on class or color)? In my own case, growing up in a tenement in East Harlem, I read with wonder stories about children who lived in houses where they went *upstairs* to bed—to me that was romantic and the alienness made it all the more intriguing. But many children may be put off rather than attracted by the alien.

There is a second and quite different pragmatic argument for ethnic studies—not that they directly serve to make the curriculum more attractive and meaningful, but that they give a greater sense of self-respect to the child of a minority group and in so doing strengthen his ability to learn. And another variant of this argument says that if we have ethnic studies we will of course have more blacks and Spanish-surnamed teachers in the schools, thereby increasing the number of "role

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models," which will again indirectly encourage the child to achieve more.

All this may well be so. It is true that Chinese, Japanese, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews—and several other groups too—did well in school even though nothing about their own history and experience was in the curriculum, and even though their own people were entirely absent from the ranks of teachers and administrators. But there are many ways of learning: perhaps the children of some groups or some children in all groups do need direct contact through the curriculum and in the school itself with their actual ways of life, with their own ethnic histories, and with adults from the same ethnic background. Here again we see that ethnic groups cannot be regarded as being like so many peas in a pod. Not only do they differ concretely from one another, but their differences may result in a variety of educational needs, such that some groups require ethnic studies and others do not. And if those who have no real need of such studies, or whose economic and political progress does not seem to have been badly hampered, ask for them anyway, is this not a case of "me-tooism," or faddishness?

Yet in contrasting Chinese, Japanese, Armenians, and Jews—who have done well in school even in the total absence of any public recognition of their culture and group life—with blacks and Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans—who have done poorly and might be helped by a recognition of their culture and group life—we tend to forget that there are many groups in the middle—Poles and other East Europeans, Irish, Germans—whose achievement has neither been remarkable for speedy progress in the face of adverse circumstances, nor notable for backwardness. Would children of these groups be helped academically if recognition were given to their group character and their cultural background? Again it is hard to say. In any case, their demand for ethnic studies is generally based not on past political oppression or on present academic or economic deprivation, but rather on the idea that all cultures must be recognized as having equal significance and dignity and that all therefore deserve a role in education and in the curriculum.

Is, then, the demand for ethnic cultural components in the curriculum honest, serious, real? By certain standards the answer may be no, but the fact is that we are now living with a new standard of public discourse that forbids this kind of dismissal. A few years ago, when blacks demanded Swahili, it was simply not considered acceptable to reply that Swahili was not widely spoken, would not be helpful to future black economic and political progress, and was in any event not the ancestral language of American blacks. Nowadays, it appears, a cultural demand can no longer be weighed on the scales of seriousness and depth. Evidently all such demands are to be taken seriously. Indeed, the point about ethnicity and ethnic consciousness is that no group submits to the judgment of others. By their very nature ethnic claims do not allow of a universal scale against which they can be measured.

I am reminded of the first time Mao buttons appeared in Berkeley. They were then jokes—to those who wore them, and to those who saw them worn. A year later they were not jokes at all. They were worn with deadly seriousness, and those who wore them were ready to engage in desperate actions to demonstrate just how serious they were. Marx once said that the first time something happens in history it is tragedy, and when it is repeated it becomes farce. Today, in reversal of Marx, what starts as farce soon becomes serious—sometimes grimly and tragically so.

In short, with regard to the question of whether the new ethnicity is serious, my conclusion is that we (that is, informed public opinion) have given up the claim to know how to answer it. No matter how extreme or outlandish it may seem to begin with, if the demand is raised, persisted in, finds adherents, it *is* serious, or as serious as anything becomes in this world. There is no universal arbiter who decides which ethnic demands are serious and just and which are not, who honors those of the blacks, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, American Indians, on the one hand, and rejects those of the Poles, the Irish, and the Italians on the other. Maybe there should be such an arbiter, but we would be deceiving ourselves to believe that there is.

GRANTED, then, that at least in principle and at least to begin with, all ethnic claims must be admitted, is this good for America? The question is so large that it may help to start with a more modest problem: is it good for education, for the curriculum? One difficulty already becoming visible is the crowding of the curriculum by the demand that all ethnic groups be recognized in, for example, the teaching of American history. Now it is one thing to include American blacks, who were here at the beginning, who were the victims of the major institution of slavery, who were a crucial factor in the most tragic and bloody of all American wars, who were the very basis of the distinctiveness of America's most distinctive region, the South, and who were —and are—deeply involved in the urban crisis which has agitated the nation for decades and will probably continue to do so for a few more. Moreover, as 11 per cent of the population—and 20 per cent at the time of the American Revolution—they exert a powerful claim for inclusion in our social-science curriculum.

But how powerful is the claim of other groups? Certainly the Irish and the Germans played a role in the urban history of the 19th century and the history of the opening of the Midwest. It is, however, hard to say whether it was significant for American development that such and such an

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immigrant group wielded pickaxes and laid the railroads and opened the prairie farmlands, as against what Americans of British origin did. Despite the fact that I have spent my life in studying and pondering the role of immigrant and racial groups in America, I remain doubtful that this aspect of the national life should be accorded the same importance as the traditional content of American history—the settling of the Thirteen Colonies, the Revolution, the making of the Constitution, the expansion territorially of the nation, the struggle over slavery, the Civil War, the industrial revolution, the entry onto the international scene as a world power, and so on. If the American history that was taught in the 1930's and 1940's were replaced by one that sectioned it up among the ethnic and racial groups, and made their fate primary—which is what is beginning to happen in our elementary and secondary schools today—I myself would not consider this an improvement.

I believe the "Americanization" of the immigrant was a great achievement, an almost unique and unparalleled achievement despite its harshness and arrogance. I am not sure that the immigrants who came to this country willingly, to work and to become citizens of a new land, were deprived when they gave up an old language for English, old cultures for a new emerging culture, old allegiances for a new allegiance. I am not suggesting that ethnic studies would undo this achievement; perhaps they would only introduce a proper balance. But the danger exists that they will end by creating a far greater distortion than the one they set out to correct. For if in teaching the history of the American Revolution, for example, we make it appear that George Washington and John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were not much more important than Haym Solomon, Crispus Attucks, Pulaski, Baron von Steuben, and whoever else might be necessary to give every group in the nation a sense of sharing in our great founding event, we not only risk distortion, we risk weakening commitment to common political values, and we risk losing the sense of the United States as a country dedicated from its birth to distinctive and great ideals.

From the point of view of the schools this last may be the greatest challenge. The schools should be committed to honest teaching, but they also socialize children. With mathematics we have no problem, but with history and English we may have a great problem. In the universities it is clear that the analytical mode should prevail (though we are well aware that in recent years there has been a danger of advocacy dominating analysis in the colleges and universities, and not only in ethnic studies). In the elementary and high schools, however, we have always "advocated" democracy and liberty, and we have always inculcated a belief in the general goodness and rightness of our country and of its role in world affairs. This advocacy is justified to my mind by the socializing function of the schools. But the pressure on textbook writers in many states today is in the opposite direction. They are being asked to substitute a new kind of advocacy which emphasizes the racist and ethnocentric aspects of American life—the narrowness and the prejudices of the founding fathers, the oppression and suffering of all minority groups, with each competing for the distinction of having been treated the worst by the "Americans."

I believe a more honest picture can be given of our past and present, one into which the facts of ethnic diversity as a constituent part of American life, culture, and politics are introduced. But when each group can make a claim on the school to tell its story and highlight its role, distortion will inevitably enter in. The curriculum, like the voting districts, will be gerrymandered, and though no one yet proposes breaking it up to the point where each and every group gets its "proper share" (whatever that may be), we are already in danger of ending up with such a notion—and sooner than we might think.

THERE once were—there still are—mechanisms for reconciling the demands and needs in education of the larger community, with the demands and needs of each sub-community. There was the afternoon school supplementing the common school, and there was the parochial school, which accepted, along with its commitment to transmit a distinctive heritage, the obligation to transmit the general tradition. There is a great deal to be said for these compromises, and we might well think of ways to strengthen them instead of importing the work of the afternoon or parochial school into the common school.

Undoubtedly our children will have a different picture of the American past in 1975 than American children had in 1965. But I hope we will find as many people to be as concerned with the distortions of 1975 as there were to be concerned with the distortions of 1965. Whatever the attractiveness of the phrase, the United States is not, in reality, "a nation of nations," nor do the overwhelming majority of Americans want it to be. One nation was created here, of many stocks. Some have altogether lost their original identities, some retain only nostalgic ties to what they once were, some are close to being peoples in the full sense. This is a complex reality, and it should not be suppressed. But neither should we be presented with a false and distorted picture in which every group is the equivalent of every other and in which our common heritage as a nation is either defamed or made to disappear.

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Erik Erikson's America

David Gutmann

THE name of Erik Erikson has been associated ever since the 1940's with a number of major innovations in the field of psychoanalytic theory. He is most closely identified with the concept of ego identity—a term that now adorns Radcliffe term papers and Gay Lib manifestoes no less than the most respectable psychiatric case studies—but he is also the chief begetter of the new field of psychohistory, through his pioneering studies of Martin Luther, Gandhi, and, more recently, Huey Newton and Thomas Jefferson, as well as the author of penetrating and original studies of the American national character.

That Erikson has now opted to become a revisionist Eriksonian should come as no great surprise. The tendency of innovators—especially in later life—to turn against their own innovations has frequently been noted; Erikson, in particular, has always shown a fear of being categorically defined once and for all, of being fixed in some unalterable prison of definition. Yet the extent to which he has lately chosen to revise his earlier views does come as something of a shock, for it is precisely the two constructs he was formerly most eager to celebrate—the psychic institution of identity and the modal American character—that he now seems most drastically bent on downgrading.

Although Erikson's ideas about identity always contained a certain measure of ambiguity—to the despair of more humble researchers attempting to "operationalize" and quantify them—one aspect of his theory seemed at least reasonably clear. Until recently, he saw the attainment of identity as an unequivocally positive achievement registering a vital—perhaps the single most vital—advance toward maturity on the part of the developing individual. Moreover, identity for Erikson was always inextricably bound up with the idea of man as a social being. Identity represented in his view the point at which the individual discovers some firm, trustworthy *equivalence* between his own history, talents, and ideals, and the embodiment of these elements within the social sector—some tenable correspondence, one might say, between the private self and the public life. For the individual achieving identity, the sense of community is no longer based on the immediate presence of parents or peers. He now gains a sense of fellowship with all those, living or dead, present in his actual life or only in his imagination, who have shared or contributed to the collective conception on which his identity is based.

It is just this achievement that Erikson has now come to mistrust, especially as it applies to that aspect of individual identity based on participation in the national community. Shared national identities may lead to a sense of common humanity among fellow nationals, Erikson now claims, but such intimacy is founded on the deliberate exclusion and degradation of aliens, and may therefore be destructive of that wider intimacy, that universal identity, which is now so desperately required. Thus, in his latest book, *Dimensions of a New Identity*,* Erikson stigmatizes shared national identities as collective myths which bring out not only the best but also the very worst in people. National identities, he now maintains, turn their adherents into members of what he calls "pseudo-species," belligerent groups which can only maintain their own sense of uniqueness and humanity by dehumanizing others.

Although Erikson does not limit this particular human tendency to Americans, he does find it most vividly exemplified in the modal American character. American man is tragically flawed, tainted at the very outset of his history by the necessity for enacting a psychic drama in which his own spiritual survival depended on the oppression of others:

> Man always needs somebody who is below him, who will be kept in place, and on whom can be projected all that is felt to be weak, low, and dangerous in oneself. If Americans had not had the Indians and the blacks—who, far from having conquered their land could not defend it, or who, far from having wanted to come here had been forced to—the new Americans would have had to invent somebody else in their place.

Having started badly, Americans are now seen by

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Erikson to be maintaining this destructive relationship to weaker peoples, as well as to their own inner "weaknesses":

> I think that recent developments in our national life such as the sudden shift of attention from military atrocity in foreign lands to political scandal at home, and then the dramatic public display of individuals responsible for or caught in such scandal, should leave no doubt about the psychological relationships I have only been able to sketch here: namely, that between the *repression* of inner conflict in those who overadjust to power, the *suppression* of adversary opinions, and the ready *oppression* of foreign people.

THESE ideas are in the sharpest possible contrast to Erikson's views about America of no more than a decade ago. In "Reflections on the American Identity" (a chapter in the 1963 revision of *Childhood and Society,* his seminal work), he held up the American character, with its acceptance of diverse ethnic strains and its emphasis on a new beginning—the "new man" beginning life anew on a new continent —as a possible starting-point for the creation of a more inclusive pan-human identity. In that paper, he was highly sympathetic to a number of American institutions, particularly the American family and the character that it typically produced:

> It [the American family] breeds, on the whole, undogmatic people, ready to drive a bargain and then to compromise. It makes complete irresponsibility impossible, and it makes open hate and warfare in families rare. It also makes it quite impossible for the American adolescent to become what his brothers and sisters in other large countries become so easily, uncompromising ideologists.

Indeed, Erikson was then so positively disposed to American institutions that he even had kind words for the military establishment and the American fighting man:

> It is true that where the "psychoneurotic" American soldier felt inadequately prepared for life, he often implicitly and more often unconsciously blamed his mother; and that the expert felt compelled to agree with him. But it is also true that the road from main street to the foxhole was no longer—geographically, culturally, psychologically—than was the road to the front lines from the towns of nations which were open to attack and had been attacked, or which had prepared themselves to attack other people's homelands and now feared for their own. It seems senseless to blame the American family for the failures, but to deny it credit for the gigantic human achievement of overcoming that distance.

Nor, in those days, did Erikson see Americans as a danger to "lesser breeds." The American character had an arsenal of defense mechanisms, but they were not based on the quasi-paranoid strategy of projecting onto the alien outsider one's own inner "dirtiness" or corruption. Instead, according to Erikson, the American character relied on the more benign, less drastic defense mechanism known as "ego restriction"—which deals with potentially troubling inner and outer experience by simply avoiding it. In marked contrast to projective defenses, which *personalize* the world in terms of good and evil, weak and strong, black and white, the ego restriction that Erikson first imputed to Americans leads rather to fixation on the *impersonal* and neutral features of the world. If it involves dehumanization of others at all, it does so by default, rather than by design; and since this form of psychological defense does not lead to self-fulfilling prophecies, it has far less malignant social consequences than does projection.

In Erikson's prior view, the American male relied on ego restriction not in order to maintain himself and his fellows as a belligerent pseudo-species, but rather because such unconscious self-limitation was a reasonable adaptation to the tenuous, shifting, and open qualities that characterize American life in all spheres. Just as his early family life had taught the young American not to value anything too deeply, since he would have to be ready to concede possessions, to strike bargains and achieve compromises among the democratic siblings, so his political party, an extension of his family arrangement, taught him to eschew rigid ideologies and passionate convictions, again in the interest of bargains and accommodations among democratic equals; and his work settings taught him to remain tentative, relatively uncommitted, ever ready to make the big move, to initiate the new beginnings that are the hallmark of "self-made men."

Far from conceiving of the American character as a major threat to small minorities and to the possibility of some more-inclusive human identity, Erikson was then more worried about its own weaknesses in the face of external coercion. He was particularly concerned with the effects of ego restriction that rendered essentially decent Americans vulnerable to manipulation by hungrier, more passionate "boss" types. In statements which to a remarkable degree predict Watergate, Erikson in 1963 warned against the likely emergence of a new and very special kind of autocrat on the American scene, adept at exploiting the special characteristics of democratic society for his own ends:

> "Bosses" are self-made autocrats and, therefore, consider themselves and one another the crown of democracy. As far as is necessary, a "boss" stays within the law, and as far as is possible he enters boldly into the vacuum left by the emancipated sons in their endeavor to restrict themselves in fairness to others. He looks for areas where the law has been de-

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liberately uncharted . . . and tries to use it and abuse it for his own purposes.

In Erikson's present view, America is not only dominated by these "bosses," but it has itself become the boss of the rest of the world. Erikson now sees America as an unscrupulous and autocratic force that has been loosed upon the world, threatening the fragile decencies of those minorities who have not yet adopted the machine as their totem, and destroying the possibility of that pan-human identity which is humanity's only salvation. Now small peoples—whether American blacks or North Vietnamese—arm themselves with desperate dignity to fight America. As Erikson said to the Black Panther leader Huey Newton in their 1971 conversations:

> It should be clear that what happened here on the frontier of the Oakland ghetto has its counterpart in the various theaters of war abroad, particularly in Vietnam, where superbly armed and uniformed technicians were again sent to the frontier by a society that wished to preserve the outer borders of an industrial empire. There, too, they have found themselves infuriatingly ineffective against what would seem to be an infiltrating lumpen proletariat.

By 1972, when he delivered his Godkin Lecure, "Play, Vision, and Deception," whatever distinction Erikson had previously drawn between the ordinary "good" American and his more vicious manipulators had virtually disappeared, swept away in the tide of almost religious fervor which has marked many of his recent pronouncements on the American character. Indeed, Erikson has begun to sound less like a psychologist lately than like a theologian, as he readily invokes the themes of sin and redemption in his admonitions to America:

> . . . this country must come to grips with its own awareness of historical guilt, over having transgressed against humanity and nature. . . . Liberation can come only from insights into the relevance of past guilt and into the place of ethical choice in the reformation of identity.

Or again:

> Many Americans have been so convinced of the goodness of mechanical efficiency and the objectivity and moral neutrality of [him] who wields it, that we were naively surprised to find that not only brutalized Germans but also nice efficient Americans can participate in the mechanical destruction of lands and people by airborne war machines, even as World War II saw American saturation bombing. Since Hiroshima we have awakened only slowly to the fact that we have been chosen to contribute to the most modern version of what Loren Eiseley calls the lethal element in the universe by having decided to use atomic weapons first.

Yet even while Erikson calls on Americans to repent, he does not seem to believe any longer that there is any real possibility for change in the dominant American character, which now stands revealed in all those limitations and contradictions which have made it a reactionary, even a lethal element on the world stage. The only hope for rebirth and renewal lies within those hitherto dispossessed American constituencies—blacks, women, alienated youth—who have either rebelled against, or been excluded from, the dominant white American way of life, and hence are not trapped in its contradictions or wedded to its desperate and destructive solutions. Most especially does he rely on the young, whom he sees as the one real possibility for the moral regeneration of America:

> Moralistic horror [about American atrocities] alone does not help. America has stepped into the center of the existential dilemma which empires have successively faced throughout historical time. Let us not delude ourselves in self-hate either; much of the rest of the world, and especially our erstwhile national enemies, are eagerly accepting our technological and commercial ideals, even as their radical youth has joined ours in a desperation and a rebellion which can only be understood as an attempt to enforce a new and all-human identity.

In short, in the early 60's Erikson saw the modal American as a decent and fundamentally reasonable individual, though one perhaps overly vulnerable to control by other, more aggressive types. Today he sees him as a dangerous and primitive psychological type, externalizing his rage and frustrations through sadistic forays against outsiders who represent metaphors of his own impotence. Which of these two versions is the correct one? Can American life and particularly the American character possibly have changed so drastically in so short a time?

Erikson would doubtless argue that since the time *Childhood and Society* was last revised, the Vietnam war revealed a new capacity for destructiveness in the American people—a talent and even zest for the "mechanical destruction of lands and peoples" that had formerly been hidden. Perhaps in fact it did. But had not foreign cities also been frightfully devastated twenty-five years earlier in World War II? Had not Erikson, long after the returns were in on such events as the saturation bombing of German cities and the fire and atomic bombing of Japanese cities, still found much to praise within the American character, even admiring the adaptability of the American soldier in adjusting so readily to the transition between the main streets of America and the battlefields of foreign lands? How then did the decent fighting man of World War II become transformed into the psychopath who fought the Vietnam war?

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No answer to these questions can be constructed on the basis of Erikson's new model of the American character. Nor does this model fit the facts of American group behavior today. For example, since American society is at the moment facing a host of troubles, one might expect, in the light of Erikson's current theories, to find Americans engaging in a veritable orgy of collective paranoia, looking for scapegoats on whom to blame their current problems: military defeat, nuclear threat, inflation, recession, political disarray, etc. Yet little of the kind seems to be taking place. There had been speculation that when the agony of the Vietnam war was finally over, a bitter reaction would set in against those viewed as being responsible for our national humiliation—the Jews, so prominent in the peace movement, seemed as likely a target as any for such recriminations. Yet in fact no significant stab-in-the-back theory ever materialized. Americans in the aftermath of Vietnam seem noticeably disinclined to seek out culprits on whom to blame our defeat in Vietnam. The chief conclusion they seem to have drawn from the Vietnam war is the eminently sane one that we should avoid such useless and costly morasses in the future. Erikson has claimed that the treatment of draft evaders and deserters is actually a hidden form of scapegoatism, a way of excluding from the national life those who "one way or another bear the brunt of our conflicts," and a way "to avoid facing either those sinister impulses or those high ideals which led them to deviate." His case would be stronger, however, if the punitive legislation affecting these cases had not already been on the books since 1940—enacted and vigorously enforced long before the Vietnam draft evasions and desertions had begun—and drafted, moreover, in its original version by anti-fascist liberals who helped both to write and to implement it.

Again, during the recent gasoline shortages, one might have expected (considering the famous American love for machines that Erikson finds so ominous) to see Americans looking high and low for a culprit on whom to blame their vehicular castration—and indeed, many Jews had feared, especially given the massive propaganda efforts by Arab and oil-company lobbies, that Israel would conveniently fill that slot in the American demonology. But as it turned out, only an insignificant fraction of the population blamed Israel for their gasless Sundays. The majority was more apt to harbor the realistic opinion that nature, the Arab oil embargo, the large oil companies, and the American government all contributed to the gasoline shortage.

Watergate is yet another example of the inaccuracy of Erikson's model. If Americans rely so heavily on what are clinically called techniques of defensive projection, they should have sympathized *en masse* with Nixon's constant portrayal of himself as an innocent party victimized by the sinister manipulation of others. But by and large they do not seem to have done so. In fact, every public display of self-pity on Nixon's part seems to have led to a further drop in the President's credibility. (Of course Erikson could claim that the President became the "scapegoat" for the general corruption, but one doubts somehow that he will.)

Indeed, the whole question of Nixon vis à vis Erikson's derogatory theory of the American character is an interesting one. While Erikson would probably say that Nixon's landslide 1972 election simply confirms his present theory of the American character—Americans gave the largest majority in their history to a devious, scapegoating, and rather paranoid man—the Nixon landslide could just as well be seen as a refutation of the new Eriksonian model. After all, Nixon's victory was largely based on his record in foreign policy. Would a nation whose psyche was peopled with sinister fantasies of otherness have so eagerly embraced the architect of the opening to China or the overtures toward the Soviet Union?

ERIKSON's revised theory of the American character does not, then, seem to predict American behavior accurately, nor does it account for what actually goes on in American life. On the contrary, it is his earlier analysis of American society which has been proving accurate with the passage of time. Thus, it is strange to hear his apocalyptic pronouncements about the predetermined "racism" and "sexism" of the American character just when the country's social institutions are engaged in a strenuous effort to accommodate the clamor for representation of a whole range of previously excluded groups. The process may be happening too slowly to please the most militant, but it has already reached a point where representatives of some groups that Erikson has designated the "victims" of American society managed, if only temporarily, to capture control of the nominating machinery of one of America's two major political parties.

The truth is that while the modal American may tend at first to block out of consciousness those groups he perceives as alien or outcast, he will, even if grudgingly, reacknowledge them once their outcast status has been altered by some gesture of self-affirmation. American blacks, for instance, began to be accepted precisely at the moment when they began to cast off their ancient definition as victims and began to frighten the white majority. Similarly, the creation of the "new Israeli Jew," who refuted the traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes of the Jew as passive and cowardly, contributed greatly to the acceptance of American Jews. All out-groups enter the American mainstream via this same process. Once having repudiated a discredited past identity, they are then free to assert a claim to equality of treatment with all other Americans and to enter

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a bid for the political influence that is the surest way to establish this claim. With the acquisition of such influence, the previously excluded group is entitled to vie for its rights along with all other groups, taking part in that archetypically American hurly-burly process of bargain, compromise, and accommodation to new realities which Erikson once described so accurately.

This pattern has shaped the experience of almost every immigrant group in American history, and has enabled Americans to tolerate an ethnic diversity that would have torn most nations apart. And it is operating now with respect to the latest wave of "immigrants" into the domain of majority attention—blacks, women, even gays, the self-styled "Third World" constituency—just as it has for the immigrant groups of the American past. In other words, that openness to change which Erikson once saw as a central American characteristic seems to be in effect now no less—and perhaps even more—than it ever was.

Just as his earlier view of the strengths of the American character is proving accurate, so is his earlier view of its weaknesses. The more it reveals itself in new forms and expressions, the more does the modal American character exhibit the weaknesses indigenous to that very "ego-restrictive" type which Erikson originally diagnosed. Instead of looking for some leader to love or for some inferior to hate, Americans continue to seek for impersonal solutions to personal problems. In order to avoid awareness of inner divisions and anxieties, they turn their attention outward to mechanics, to nature, and to concrete actions: they drive their cars and their snowmobiles, they putter and tinker, they become sexual athletes with relatively anonymous partners, they hunt and fish, or they go to the moon. In the more passive but still impersonal mode, they nurse at the electronic breast, and they watch *other* men's impersonal athletics, or their equally impersonal violence. They are as likely to get emotional comfort from food as from people; and when things get really bad internally, they pour alcohol, an impersonal metaphor of virility, down their throats.

The irony is that the youthful radicals to whom Erikson looks for redemption seem to embody these very weaknesses of the modal American character rather than its strengths. They talk a lot about intimacy, but their major supports come either from impersonal sources, or from pseudo-intimate relationships with easily replaceable group members. They claim to eschew materialism, but they look for their pleasures and their remedy in the impersonal bounty of chemicals, food, wine, anonymous sex, and electronically amplified noise. Their leaders are apt to be instant gurus who advise them to achieve grace by dissolving their ego boundaries and merging with the infinite—that is, through losing rather than accentuating their identity or personhood. That inclusive, pan-human identity which Erikson awaits from the new youth sounds like wishful thinking: if anything, they seem to reject the very idea of coherent identities, since these put too much limitation on future choice, on some alleged future possibility for change and renewal. They insist on their right to be saints and psychopaths, yogis and commissars, men and women, and all at once. They are still the self-made and eternally re-made Americans, forever insisting on the right to rebirth and a clean slate. Their real goal would seem to be not identity (which implies choice and commitment) but its opposite—identity *diffusion*—that state in which one keeps symbolic title to all options by prolonging indefinitely the decision to adopt one or the other.

Like the new youth, Erikson too finds it hard to surrender title to all possible options: "When I was asked to give an account of the ways that my ideas have developed from my life," he has told Robert Coles,

> I thought that the concept of the boundary might be the fitting symbol for the whole of my personal and social development. At almost every point, I have had to stand between alternatives, to be completely at home in neither, and to take no definitive stand against either. Since thinking presupposes receptiveness, this position is fruitful for thought; but difficult in life, which demands decision, and the exclusion of alternatives.

Erikson's mistrust of boundaries is shared by the new youth which is devoted to eliminating them through drugs, group-grope, unisex. Thus Erikson—who was once the chief spokesman for ego identity—could become just another trendy sponsor and legitimator of identity diffusion.

But Erikson's identification with the new youth is based no less on shared politics than on shared personality traits. The revisions in his thinking have clearly proceeded along lines set down in the standard radical critique of American mores and institutions which holds that the structures and practices of American capitalist society destroy the possibilities for true community by fostering competition among individuals, classes, and races, which leads in turn to the domination by a white male elite over the "lower" orders. Erikson has not only accepted this idea; he has extended it beyond American social institutions to include the internal politics of the American character itself.

Erikson's politics and his reasons for adopting them are his own business; but it appears that in order to meet the demands of his political position he has done violence to some of his most important conceptions and insights. As a psychologist who up to now has identified with Erikson's theoretical position, I deplore this seeming politicization of his thought, and the consequent reduction in his stature as an independent and creative thinker.

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The Idea of Decadence

Renee Winegarten

NOWADAYS, when people actually line up to see an exhibition of paintings by Gustave Moreau or Edvard Munch, or to say goodbye to Berlin for the umpteenth time—and moreover, wallow in Nazi-period nostalgia or in the picture of bourgeois degradation conjured up by some well-heeled neo-Marxist film director—it might seem otiose to inquire whether our Western culture, as a whole, is decadent. I hazard a guess that if an opinion poll on decadence were conducted now, a great many answers would be in the affirmative. And no doubt each person would be able to state without much hesitation the ground for his belief.

Some would join in proposing the decline in religious faith and moral values, and the morbid growth of interest in the occult. Others would readily opt for misgovernment, scandal in high places, corruption in public affairs, lack of true leadership, and the failure to resolve enduring economic, monetary, and social problems. Yet others would suggest sexual license, erotomania, hermaphroditism, drug-taking, as patent signs of decadence. A number would urge the deplorably coarse, literal-minded trend of much current literature and art. Each person can anxiously add his own favorite moral and artistic bugbears to the list. Many would point to the gratification of selfish instincts in place of the values of service and duty, and to effeminacy and materialistic luxury instead of the simple, manly virtues: in short, the overflowing of the Orontes into the Tiber.

Add to these symptoms of decay, rottenness, and degeneracy, the arrival of the "barbarians," lesser breeds without the law, and you have a pretty frightening picture of a sick society, its confidence undermined, quite unwilling or unable to meet the difficult challenges facing it, and possessed by a sense of impending doom and destruction. You have the mirror-image of the end of the Roman Empire, orgiastic, vicious, stagnant—or, at least, what generations of writers of genius (to say nothing of Hollywood) have convinced us that Rome in its centuries of decadence must have been like.

Scarcely anything today, from long hair (in men) and "streaking" (by both sexes) to a partly ironic discussion about innuendo in Shakespeare's sonnets in the *Times Literary Supplement,* that does not inspire someone to cry decadence. Yet if we look a little more closely at the reasons suggested for the view that Western culture is decadent, we shall see that a good many of them are based on the values of imperialism, the concept of national greatness, the martial virtues, or on a Victorian attitude to social conduct and sexual candor. Frequently, cultural vigor is being confused with political hegemony or moral virtues. Or else the argument is rather too easily being extended from the particular to the general.

That nearly everything has been considered a germ of decadence at one time or another, by men of widely divergent views ranging from the conservative to the radical, should give us pause. For Nietzsche, who was haunted by the subject, both Socrates and Christianity were decadent. A glance at Herzl's friend, Max Nordau, when he is solemnly adducing Mallarmé's "long, pointed, faun-like ears" as a distinguishing mark of degeneracy, or at the mighty Tolstoy in process of charging Ibsen (and other artistic giants among his contemporaries) with decadence, brings us to the lunatic fringe and our own day. Extremist movements, including Fascism, Nazism, Communism—sometimes with the deliberate support but also often with the unthinking cooperation of eminent writers—have played skillfully and successfully upon panic terrors of social and cultural decay and decadence.

Amid the higher nonsense (much of it grotesque to the point of ridicule, had not sinister or fatal consequences ensued for those dissidents or minorities condemned as decadent), there lies a small platitudinous core of plausibility. This plausible-sounding note can stir a self-indulgent response as readily as tears well up in the eyes of a practiced actor. For things are never as fine and good as they used to be, or as we like to think they were. There are times when everything seems to be going wrong (as improbable a hypothesis as that everything can be going right). The book of the faults and complexities of the present can-

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not be closed like that containing the difficulties and errors of the past; and when these new problems (or old ones in new guise) accumulate and refuse to go away, they arouse a deep sense of malaise, frustration, and desperation. Much is always bad, wrong, hateful, seemingly insoluble, but is it therefore decadent?

We have to inquire why the idea of decadence seems to seize possession of people at some moments rather than at others. Why are we still so ready to generalize about whole civilizations, and to find our own epoch and culture decadent? (And the fondness for this kind of generalization endures despite the sustained criticism of the pseudo-scholarly tradition of civilization-augury that runs from the disappointed French aristocrat, Gobineau, to the disgruntled German schoolmaster, Spengler, his avowedly anti-Spenglerian descendants, Toynbee and Malraux, and their less gifted followers.) What lies behind the concept of decadence to render it so appealing to the imagination? Above all, who stands to profit by its widespread acceptance? The preconception of a disintegrating culture may serve as an alibi for the kind of trivial, lowering, or joky modern art which justifies itself as a reflection of that disintegration, but such questions do not concern art and cultural history alone. They vitally affect our morale and our ability to cope with any new and difficult challenge.

IN ORDER to attempt to discover whether the word "decadent" is reasonably applicable to Western culture or civilization, it will first be necessary to cast a brief backward glance over both "culture" and "decadence." It is, however, extremely difficult to say what the decline or decadence of Western culture means, since opinions differ as to precisely what Western culture really is (despite earnest efforts to define culture and civilization or to distinguish between them, from Kant to Thomas Mann and after). All we know is that our culture is rich, varied, complex, and that—notwithstanding much that seems unattractive about some contemporary aspects of it, such as the widespread, perilous debasement of language—things would be most unpleasant if it were somehow suppressed or did not exist. It is also extremely difficult to measure or verify a decline in culture—rather as if we were awarding marks to geniuses or periods. What does seem clear, though, is that the historical idea of decadence—as, by definition, a state of decay or the process of falling away from a prior state of excellence, vitality, prosperity—has become linked to the historical idea of culture and cultural progress, growth, or ascent.

If a writer posits a high point of culture or civilization, like the now damaged 19th-century concept of the Renaissance, for instance, he has to have, as well as a lesser age from which it can arise, a lower stage into which it must decline. He has to have progress and decay. Nowadays, the idea of progress, especially in the arts, may be discredited. Modern appreciation of the arts of former times may tend to be all-inclusive. Yet, although it is now widely agreed that there is no high point in the past which is complete and perfect in every sphere of human activity and aspiration, nevertheless the fiction of its opposite, a total and perfect decadence, persists.

While the word "decadence" became current in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries, the idea stems from old age's criticism of youth and youth's awareness that it is not like its forefathers. The mighty are fallen and we shall not look upon their like again. Once, men were austere, heroic, innocent; once, virtue and study flourished, ran the poetic trope. There was the notion that, just as a human being passes through the cycle of birth, youth, maturity, decline, and death, so must every aspect of the universe: "For the nature of the world as a whole is altered by age. Everything must pass through successive phases," wrote the influential Epicurean poet, Lucretius. Like many easily grasped concepts that purport to describe processes about which we still know virtually nothing, this one continues to enjoy a long life.

As soon as the idea of human growth and decline was extended to the arts, it became tinged with fear. Seeking to understand and maintain the artistic florescence of his day, Vasari in 1550 remarked how the arts of painting and sculpture "resemble nature as shown in our human bodies; and have their birth, growth, age, and death. . . ." But inevitably, along with his awareness of "the progress of the renaissance of the arts and the perfection to which they have attained in our own time," there grew a deep sense of foreboding. For if the arts could rise from a small beginning to the highest elevation, they could equally easily fall again into total ruin and decay—whether through human negligence, "the malignity of the age," or the divine decree of mutability. This dread of cultural decline, the concomitant of cultural rise, so powerfully conveyed by Vasari, has continued to oppress writers and artists alike, down to our own day.

But it was among 19th-century writers with their acute self-consciousness, that the concept of decadence really took hold, along with historicism itself. In the previous century, the laws governing the rise and decline of nations and empires had been moved from the divine to the secular sphere. Now, fascinated by history, writers began to seek ever more passionately for the secret laws of the social plant, for the spiritual causes determining the cycle from birth through decay to death and oblivion, for the key to the enigma of mutability.

In an age when creativity was so highly prized, it appeared especially important to discover the reasons why—as it seemed—a people suddenly reached the peak of creative energy, or just as suddenly ceased to demonstrate the creative vigor

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of youth and springtime. In all likelihood, writers in the 19th century pursued and imposed the ideal of the Renaissance partly because of their own sense of cultural decline. Renaissance creativity was the obverse of their own medal, some felt, mistakenly as it now seems to us. They followed Gibbon's dictum to the effect that "all that is human must retrograde if it [does] not advance." We still tend to share the idea that civilization must be either growing and pressing ever onward and upward, or else disintegrating into nothingness, instead of going on, variously developing and changing in a multitude of different areas, in ways not always perceptible to the human eye.

Moreover, we may often like to think of the deeply torn 19th century as an era of stability, confidence, and belief in progress, but many of its finest poets had little doubt that they had arrived on the scene far too late in a world that had grown too old. Their sad picture of boundless decadence served to counterbalance the cheerful theory of unlimited progress. From Byron to Arnold and Tennyson, they had intimations of a doom that ever poised itself to fall. In Germany, at least from Novalis, with his view of civilization's withering, and in France, from Chateaubriand onward, through Nodier, Gautier, and Victor Hugo, the gloomy chorus of complaint swelled. They bemoaned a degenerate world, a devitalized society, an aged and exhausted people. As early as 1829, Victor Hugo saw Europe as worm-eaten and full of cracks. In 1832, Gautier announced that our decrepit world is in its death throes. Later they would be joined by countless others, obsessed with decay, from Ernst Jünger to Louis-Ferdinand Céline, from Thomas Mann to T. S. Eliot. This refrain, which never seems to weary with repetition, can still be heard today, uttered by eminent writers as if it were some startling new discovery. When played by lesser hands, the tune is but the commonplace expression of the distaste for and fear of the present—a tedious aspect of the modish intellectual pessimism of our day.

If epochs can grow old and die, what is to prevent them from becoming subject to disease? The medical metaphor of epochal health and sickness was beautifully framed by Goethe (to whom—as to Nietzsche—Spengler would respectfully acknowledge his indebtedness). The general sickness of the present day, announced Goethe in 1826, is subjectivity: "All eras in a state of decline and dissolution are subjective; on the other hand, all progressive eras have an objective tendency. Our present time is retrograde, for it is subjective: we see this not merely in poetry, but also in painting, and much besides. Every healthy effort, on the contrary, is directed from the inward to the outward world; as you see in all great eras, which were really in a state of progression and all of an objective nature." Convinced that there was such a thing as healthy effort, healthy genius, a healthy era, writers began looking for hidden symptoms, and it was not long before they found the latent ripening germs of death in apparently healthy periods and peoples. Soon they were reflecting on unhealthy genius and unhealthy eras. Those who later called for the unhealthy elements to be excised—by which they meant the individuals or groups supposedly representing the cancerous growth of decadence said to infect dying regimes—were being perfectly logical. But their logic was founded, not on fact, but on surgical metaphor, which is probably responsible for more deaths in our century than the surgeon's knife in past ages.

Morbid private fears about old age, a decline in vigor, the loss of faculties, about lingering sickness and pain, and the humiliations attendant upon them, become transferred to one's people and nation, one's era and culture, one's entire world. This process is exacerbated today when the cult of youth makes the terror of old age even more intense. Indeed, what could be more terrifying? For it is not just the individual who may be destined to senility and premature decomposition (the possibility of an active, dignified old age not being considered). The very air he breathes is polluted by decadence. The very home that should represent the secure framework in which he moves, is already rotten and worm-eaten and likely to collapse at any minute. Nothing will remain.

Add to this visceral dread the forceful Hegelian idea that each nation has only one chance; that those nations whose hour has struck no longer count in world history. The delusions of past grandeur, power, and glory, are then compounded with the fear of being consigned to the ashcan of history, like some pauper who once saw better days being shoveled into a nameless grave.

To be born into such an age of decay and decline—hard lines if, like the Empire of the East, it happens to last a thousand and fifty-eight years—is clearly regrettable. "Hapless ages, wherein if ever in any, it is an unhappiness to be born," thundered Carlyle, for in the soil of such decadent ages no ideal can blossom. (It now seems scarcely credible that he was speaking thus of mid-18th-century France.) Having aroused terrors of total sterility, however, he then consoles with the vision of new growth. While some try not to leave their readers in a state of utter darkness and despondency, others complacently envisage the complete annihilation of a culture. The fact is that they can find new seed germinating, or not, just as the mood takes them.

In any case, this cataclysmic picture is a good deal more dramatic and stirring than the dull portrayal of a form of cultural continuity which undergoes rapid changes or subtle modifications. The writer who purports to probe decadence may sometimes admit to feeling contaminated by it,

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but usually he stands in relation to his public as doctor to patient. Even if he cannot suggest a cure—though some, by proposing a return to a former regimen or the adoption of some "new" panacea, have pretensions to doing so—the very fact that he is able to diagnose the sickness gives him the Olympian air of a surgeon touring the hospital wards.

At the back of everyone's mind is the awe-inspiring model of the lingering decline of ancient Rome. The slow collapse of the empire, once thought to be eternal, has been the dominant historical catastrophe in the imagination of the West. It instills the fear that there can be no empire without decadence. (And we have recently heard President Nixon, inspired by a moonlight stroll in the Roman forum, advising the Daughters of the American Revolution to see that Washington does not suffer the fate of Rome.) But who can tell the moment when decadence begins? That is the dreadful thing. Decadence is the secular equivalent of death at the feast, the modern *memento mori* for unbelievers. One may be in the midst of decadence without even knowing it is there. One may be gaily flitting about when already smitten with the horrible disease. It will be remembered that Toynbee not only criticized Gibbon for beginning his narrative far too late with the age of the Antonines, but went so far as to declare that the Roman Empire was "already doomed before it was established."

This is pure predestinarian poetry. Nothing is more likely to make plain to us that we are in the presence of a powerfully resonant metaphor and artistic device. The first requirement of composition being the need to impose form upon a shapeless mass of material, no writer is going to keep his reader's attention for long with a narrative consisting of "one thing after another," which (with a few exceptions) is usually what the greater part of life is like. Hence the quest for origin and end, zenith and nadir, growth and decline, rise and fall, florescence and decadence. Where would writers be without these essential props for their narrative? For a start, half the season's arresting titles would have to be scrapped. Yet there is no harm done, so long as the metaphor is recognized for what it is—a convenient sign rather than a literal fact, exact measure, strict diagnosis. In a striking essay, Professor Morse Peckham recently suggested that history (and by history he intended to embrace all kinds of writing about the past) is "a rhetorical mode, that is, a linguistic over-determination." The same might doubtless be said of all forms of writing, but nonetheless he offers a salutary thought to be borne in mind whenever wide-ranging conclusions about cultural decadence are being drawn from small premises.

As already suggested, the larger theme of decadence includes the poetry of mortality as well as a form of critical attack. That the image of decadence carries a very potent melancholy appeal can scarcely be doubted. If Montesquieu recognized this by devoting more chapters to the decadence of the Romans than to their grandeur, so did Gibbon who, however, sagely made no reference to their greatness in his title. Gibbon's immediate inspiration, the contemplation of ruins, had provided a fertile source of moralizing reflection about mortality for centuries, but it took Romantic poets and artists to find ruins more attractive than solid edifices, and forsaken, unweeded gardens lovelier than cultivated ones. The sad, dim shades of twilight seemed so much more moving than the clarity of day. If it was to be twilight in the gardens of the West, there was something not entirely unpleasing in the thought.

More puzzling and disturbing, though, is the strong fascination exerted by the barbarians. Certainly, the revaluation we associate with Romanticism brought about a vital change in the attitude to the barbarians and their artifacts, as interest shifted from the Romans to those who had contributed to bring about their downfall. Poetry itself was now thought to be the prerogative of primitive, barbarian ages. With the growing belief that each period or civilization had its own character, came the belief that each was equally worthy. The thought occurred that perhaps Asiatic barbarism, too, was not so lacking in superior talents as had previously been alleged.

Soon, some writers were expressing an active preference or yearning for the poetic or creative potential of barbarism. Even before 1850, they were accepting the title of barbarians, before adopting that of decadents. The coming of the barbarians meant rejuvenation as well as destruction. Culture itself could only be renewed by strong doses of barbarism. If civilization (in its hated, modern, industrial shape) represented corruption and poison, then barbarism might well be the antidote. At least the barbarians would be "a kind of solution," say the bored citizens who stand waiting for them to arrive, in Cavafy's celebrated poem:

> Why this sudden unrest and confusion?
> (How solemn their faces have become.)
> Why are the streets and squares clearing
> quickly,
> and all return to their homes, so deep
> in thought?
>
> Because night is here but the barbarians
> have not come.
> Some people arrived from the frontiers,
> and they said that there are no longer any
> barbarians.
>
> And now what shall become of us without
> any barbarians?
> Those people were a kind of solution.

This attitude of world-weary, sophisticated anticipation, joined with the enjoyment of what

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is thought to be outrageously decadent, so common nowadays, together serve less as a real token of decadence, perhaps, than as an essential part of the corruption spread by the supine welcome accorded to the theme of general decadence. The fascination of barbarism and decadence has become a notable aspect of modern culture. All too often, they awaken no disapproval: they are accepted because everything is acceptable. It is a trend which should be carefully scrutinized and vigorously resisted.

Once, the aesthetic cult of decadence, despite its absurd excesses, did represent an important enlargement of taste. But, at the same time, it revealed, along with a puerile desire to shock, a more sinister development: a vicarious pleasure in cruelty and depravity, and a growing conviction that barbarism was a good, necessary, inevitable stage on the path to renewal and future health. Of course, an injection of barbarism might prove as fatal to the individual as to the society and culture of which he formed part, and this realization was a source of profound self-pity. Still, all too many people were ready to write themselves off. Convinced of their own and their age's decadence, when the time of trial came they went out to welcome the barbarians, first in imagination and then in reality. It could happen again, if the defeatist thesis of Western decline and decay is allowed to continue unquestioned.

For while it would be foolish to suppose that there is no such thing as decline, nonetheless the cumulative emotional impact of the constant harping on decadence should not be underestimated. This fashionably joyless ambience encourages the flight into some idealized period of the past, when people did not know pollution but they had plague instead. It fosters the impossible dream of the restoration of former values, or concentrates hopes on some wonderful future renewal. Meanwhile, the present age, excoriated for its moral decay and sterility, hangs between the myths of the past and those of the future. Rather like Tennyson's Tithonus, sentenced to everlasting old age in the company of immortal youth—

> Me only cruel immortality
> Consumes: . . .

—it longs in vain for its own death. Or else it is seen as actually dead already, so that with Musset or Arnold the living are suspended between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born. Indeed, whether an unconscionable time a-dying or already undergoing *rigor mortis*, the present is not worth much.

ONLY too often, the belief that one is living at the end of a moribund cycle enables the person who holds it to evade responsibility. That is why it can be so pleasurable. He is not to blame—and one can hardly blame either the immutable laws of mutability that govern existence or the tragic flaw that leads inevitably to a corpse-strewn stage. For if Western civilization is tragically in its death throes, then clearly there is nothing to be done about it. Old age cannot be cured. An epoch or a civilization cannot be prevented from breathing its last. A natural process that happens to all flesh and all human manifestations cannot be arrested. You can only wring your hands and utter a beautiful swan song. However skeptical people may be about everything else, in this particular field they have no doubts. They may not know the hour of their own death, but they know that the hour of Western culture has struck.

Just as it did in the 20's and 30's, this spineless attitude continues to play into the hands of the new barbarians, those whose avowed aim it is to overthrow and destroy utterly what they maintain is a decadent order of things. That their propaganda should seek to undermine the confidence of their opponents seems reasonable enough. But that the intended victim of their assault should help to do their work for them is less comprehensible. We can mark the end of a regime, but nobody really knows if or when a cultural cycle concludes, or a civilization decays, declines, and falls. (Besides, there is a deeper sense in which the best of Greece and Rome still lives, in our language, literature, and laws.) Rapid and violent upheavals may convey the impression that we can perceive such processes of cultural birth, decay, and death, but this impression is a kind of optical illusion. We can place the moment of birth or decline wherever we choose, in accordance with our own definitions, preconceptions, and values. And we ourselves are completely inside a moribund world only if we wish to think we are.

Decadence, then, seems a term of only limited usefulness. To accept unreservedly the idea of a total falling off from past standards implies that we have become the victims of our own conception of the past. To a large extent, we are still locked in certain imaginative assumptions imposed in the 19th century, despite the havoc that these assumptions have already wrought. We remain content to speak of sick ages and cultures, rather than of misguided or perverted individuals. We attribute too much to the fatality of decline. Perhaps, after all, it is not decadence itself, so much as the ready acceptance of the idea of an all-pervasive decadence, which is insidiously demoralizing, especially in vulnerable democracies. For, as has been well said, it is often not the real losses in battle which prove disastrous, but the imaginary loss and the discouragement which drain away the strength that fate had left untouched.

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Everyman in Chinatown

William S. Pechter

SOME MONTHS ago, in a generally unenthusiastic survey of the highly acclaimed work of some young American directors, I mentioned Terrence Malick's *Badlands*, one of the great successes of the last New York Film Festival, and a film I hadn't then seen. I've since seen the film, which I think must be said to constitute an imposing directorial debut by any standard. Generically indebted to *Bonnie and Clyde* and specifically suggested by the 1958 Charles Starkweather-Caril Ann Fugate Midwestern murder spree, *Badlands* has a cool detachment quite unlike the numerous offspring of *Bonnie and Clyde*, and an intellectual rigor I was unprepared for by the rather genial nature of what I knew of Malick's previous work: his script for *Pocket Money*, a film made by another director, with Paul Newman and Lee Marvin as a pair of drifting contemporary cowboys. Stylistically, unlike *Pocket Money*, *Badlands* is (apart from one mistaken attempt to recreate some authentic-looking period newsreel footage) impressively of a piece, from the exactingly wrought language of its script (which Malick wrote) to the composition of its hard-edged images (though these are occasionally undercut by a rather too bright and mushily pretty color sense). Indeed, everything about the film seems the product of a director's controlling intelligence and artfulness to a degree almost alarming in the case of a first film by a director so young. Which is to say that *Badlands* is exceedingly well-made, and still not to say exactly what it is.

In a sense, it's easier to say, of a film so stripped in form and terse of expression, what it is not. For all that it's based on actual events, *Badlands* evinces almost no interest in what, specifically, the Starkweather murders emerged from, either psychologically or socially, nor is there any attempt to capture in Kit, the film's protagonist, any resemblance to Starkweather's shoe-polish-in-his-hair tough punk. Instead, the mass murderer this film gives us is at all times soft-spoken, courteous even to his victims, and given to recording for posterity such advice as, "Listen to your parents and teachers" and "Consider the minority opinion. But try to consider the majority opinion once it's been accepted." He is, in fact, so much the clean-cut, Middle-American young man par excellence, distinguished only by this bottomless capacity for affectless violence, that one comes to see him (and Holly, his wide-eyed, freckle-faced, baton-twirling, and equally affectless fifteen-year-old paramour) as typical, the norm: what anyone else of all those he resembles might be, given a gun in his hand and the faintest hint of provocation. And though we see nothing of what he grows out of—no family, no friends, not even a passerby on his town's streets—the place he inhabits, the landscape he traverses, is recognizably our own: the "badlands" not only a particular region, but America itself.

Of course, the subject of the violence of American life is no longer anything novel in films; indeed, it's the subject of *Bonnie and Clyde* itself. Rather, the novelty of *Badlands* has to do with the utter dead affectlessness of its principals, whose gift for deadpan understatement grows at times so mannered as to risk plunging the film into inadvertent comedy. "I found a toaster," Kit remarks dryly, after returning from the cellar where he's deposited the corpse of their first victim, Holly's father. "Hi!" Holly says in her flat, expressionless voice to first one, then another of their subsequent victims. And when Kit shoots an acquaintance at whose house they hide out (after shooting him in front of his house, Kit politely holds the door open so the dying man can step inside), his only comment to Holly is, "I got him in the stomach," whereupon she asks, "Is he upset?" and Kit replies, "He didn't say anything to me about it." (This flatness of conversational style contrasts nicely with the florid style, compounded of pulp novels and movie magazines, in which Holly narrates the film, and which is rife with such locutions as "Little did I know . . ." and "Through endless mesa . . . we made our headlong way" and "I dreamed of being lost forever in his arms.") Perhaps no other single moment in the film so resonantly bespeaks this affectlessness as the one in which we see Kit firing a shot into a football, while Holly narrates: "Before we left, he shot a football he considered excess baggage." Kit's logic is starkly simple: when you don't need something, you shoot it, and there's nothing that isn't amenable to the arbitration of a gun. (At another point, Holly notes a piece of his advice: "He said if the devil came at me, I could shoot him with a gun.") As Charles Starkweather himself declared of his victims, "Those people got in the way, so I had to kill them all."

YET, for all that, the real Charles Starkweather was a good deal less the "normally" affectless boy next door than is Kit, given instead to such pathological embellishments as jamming his gun up a victim's rectum. Of course, to have suggested such idiosyncrasy in Kit would have been to call into question his ability to carry the weight of being the exemplar of a Middle-American life with which the film's variation on the *Bonnie and Clyde* materials attempts to shoulder him. For if *Bonnie and Clyde* is the prototypical expression in contemporary films of the romanticized outlaw, *Badlands* is, as surely and self-consciously as those last-cowboy Westerns, an attempt to write a genre's epitaph: to do in the movies' last hero, and reveal the bankruptcy of the rebel's cause. (As if to emphasize the theme of the rebel hero's decline, there are continual

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remarks throughout the film on Kit's resemblance to James Dean, and at one point he is even allowed to strike a famous Dean pose from *Giant,* a pose, incidentally, suggestive of a crucifixion in a way relevant to that film and anomalous in this. In fact, the only resemblance between Dean and Martin Sheen, who plays Kit, that I could see was in their hair styles, nor is there any of Dean's electric excitement in the performance of Sheen, whom I recognize to be an actor of intelligence, but one I've nevertheless always found, with his bantamweight physical presence and incongruously deep, monotonous voice, to be somehow dull.)

But to have allowed any of the real Charles Starkweather, or the real anything else, to creep into the film would have been to put content, however morbid, where Malick is determined there be emptiness. For the conceit upon which Malick's protagonist is constructed is that he passes unaltered from the utter impoverishment of his private life to his no less impoverished public one, in which, after his capture, he takes his moment in the limelight to hand out souvenirs and tell his audience that his favorite singer is Eddie Fisher. And so anything which might do more than hint at the peculiarity of Kit's inner life, or which might root Kit's psychosis in a specific social or psychological context, is deliberately excluded, subordinated to the singlemindedness of the director's vision. Indeed, one might even say that exclusion is the ruling principle of *Badlands,* so much has had to be left out in order that the film's vision be unobstructed. And those fugitive moments which do convey a genuinely disturbing strangeness—the image of Kit at his job in a stockyard, putting his foot on the head of a dead cow, while Holly's narrating voice intones, "Each lived for the precious hours when he or she could be with the other, away from the cares of the world"; Holly telling us that Kit would sometimes wake at night and hear the roar of the ocean in his ear; the sequence (its strangeness enhanced by the score's ingenious blending of Orff and Satie) of Holly's house, which they've set aflame, burning—remain only fugitive moments. The singlemindedness of *Badlands* is impressive, but if the film is (as, say, *Mean Streets* is not) disciplined, it flirts with the danger of being disciplined to death. And ultimately its vision of the impoverishment of American life seems itself impoverished; too much has been left out to make it stick. Even if America, and American life, are no better than what this film envisions, they are, one feels, more complicated and complex. Above all, they are more interesting, which is something that *Badlands,* for all its intelligence and artfulness, is not.

IN THE earnest naiveté of my youth, I once put to a composer friend the question of how one would evaluate a piece of music written wholly in, say, the baroque or classical idiom should one happen to be composed by someone living today; what if, that is, a new Bach or Haydn should suddenly appear, writing in the style and on the level of the old? The answer (or evasion of an answer) I was given was that the question itself was invalid, since it was impossible (barring a host of science-fiction qualifiers) for a first-rate piece of music in the exact style of an earlier period to be written in the present because truly living, first-rate art springs from a tradition, and has to be in some way affected by the influences that tradition brings to bear: that, in other words, a 20th-century symphony in the classical style was, of its nature, bound to be either as decidedly modern in temper as Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* or as dessicated as Stravinsky's *Symphony in C.*

That long-buried question rose from its grave, alive as ever, when I saw *Chinatown,* the new film by Roman Polanski (a director whose previous work I have never liked much), which attempts not only to revive the 40's-private-eye movie but to do so in the style of the 40's-private-eye movies, and which seems to me to rank right up there with the best of them. Are there qualifiers? Could *Chinatown* have been made today (no less, made in this way: in the direct, open, classically "invisible" style of 30's and 40's Hollywood moviemaking) by an American? Hasn't Polanski heard the news that the traditional genres are exhausted? (One knows, of course, that he has, since he himself has spoofed horror films in *The Fearless Vampire Killers,* and burlesqued gangsters in *Cul-de-Sac,* which I thought, before *Chinatown,* his most original work.) Isn't he aware that none is quite so exhausted as the private-eye genre, forever done in by Altman's *The Long Goodbye?* (As I write, a remake of *The Maltese Falcon,* given the *Long-Goodbye* treatment, is, I dread to say, in the offing.) The questions are, of course, rhetorical, and hung on the conceit that Polanski, that most cosmopolitan of "foreign" directors, could come to the genre in wide-eyed innocence. And yet his achievement in *Chinatown* does fly in the face of every trendy bad idea with which the contemporary American film is riddled. Even *Chinatown*'s period setting—pre-World War II Los Angeles—seems, at this moment, a semi-miraculous accomplishment; has there been for years a film that used a 30's (or 20's, or 40's) setting which seemed so naturally right for its story, and with so little sense of pushing period at you? But what *Chinatown* does, above all, is to reaffirm, as did *The Godfather,* the intellectual and aesthetic pleasures of that "exhausted" and "done in" art of storytelling, here invested with such skillfulness in the orchestration of narrative tensions that a scene of the hero putting on his pajamas as he gets ready for bed can seem positively thrilling in its charge of suspenseful undertones. And yet such skills have in recent times grown so suspect, have come to seem so frivolous as we've increasingly been conditioned to recognize art less by its pleasures than its punishments, that I find myself at something of a loss even to name no less than to praise them.

So I'm tempted simply to call *Chinatown* one of the best private-eye movies ever made and leave it at that, and yet this seems to me to pay it too double-edged a compliment. On one hand, it is important not to let such models as *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* exert too great a tyranny: important to be able to say that a film such as *Chinatown* is in the same

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league with them. Robert Towne's original script (something about tangled relations and land grabs among the high and mighty in burgeoning Los Angeles) oscillates satisfyingly between the lucidity of *The Maltese Falcon* and the opacity of *The Big Sleep*, which is to say I found myself keeping up with the mystery's unraveling, but just barely; though such details as the way a key word, "albacore," is at first mistakenly heard as "apple core" inspire confidence that the plot is as well-knit in large matters as in small. And, as tyrannical models go, it seems to me important to be able to say also that Jack Nicholson (as private eye, J. J. "Jake" Gittes) is every bit as good as (though different from) Bogart. It's a quieter, less flamboyant performance Nicholson gives here than in *The Last Detail*, but one which nonetheless confirms one's impression from that earlier film of his combining a Brando-like sexual menace (between them, they might just bring thinning hair into vogue) with a Cagneyesque brash ebullience. Everything he does he makes seem fresh: to put it negatively, watch how he recovers in stages from realizing that he's told a dirty joke (which he tells, incidentally, as infectiously as he does the one in *The Last Detail*) with a proper female client within earshot, a moment whose temptation to mugging almost any other actor would have found irresistible. And it's moments such as this, as much as the plot's development and the bursts of action, which provide the film's pleasures: Nicholson's manner with the various characters he encounters; his professionally cynical demeanor as he deals with the woman who first retains him in the case; his beaming good spirits as he reclines in a rowboat during a moment when he (mistakenly) believes he's on top of the events which have begun inexorably unfolding around him.

YET what does one mean when one refers to the best private-eye movies made? For if something like *That's Entertainment* (which might be described alternately as M-G-M's going-out-of-business sale, or the first coffeetable movie) reminds us how very few really first-rate musicals there actually were, so, too, has the private-eye film taken on a legendary status out of all proportion to its real achievements. To be sure, there is *The Maltese Falcon*, which could be called a great movie, and *The Big Sleep*, which is enjoyable enough to make one not care at all if it couldn't be; but, apart from these two, one is struck not only by how few private-eye films there are which are good but by how few films there are at all (at least above the B-movie level) in the tough private-detective mold.* Other than one Sam Spade (in *The Maltese Falcon*, whose current remake will be the fourth version) and six Philip Marlowes (spanning from the 1944 *Murder My Sweet* to *The Long Goodbye*), *The Dark Corner*'s slick amalgam of the Chandler films and *Laura* are virtually all that come to mind. And of the 40's Marlowes besides *The Big Sleep*, though Dick Powell is first-rate in *Murder My Sweet*, the film itself, however entertaining, certainly isn't, and *Lady in the Lake*, Robert Montgomery's experiment in the sustained use of subjective camera (you, the spectator, see everything from the detective-hero's viewpoint) seems mainly a curious dead end, while my own opinion that *The Brasher Doubloon* is the sleeper of the series probably represents a minority of one. Of such stuff are movie legends made.

And yet it's here, I think, in its subtle acknowledgment and use of the legendary status of its genre, that one sees what it is that differentiates *Chinatown* from the private-eye films of the past, and is distinctly contemporary in its character. For my composer friend was right, you can't write a 20th-century *Brandenburg Concerto*, and you can't make a 40's-private-eye movie in 1974 either. But it's not (as some have suggested) in any Watergate parallels or increased pessimism that one sees the contemporaneity of *Chinatown*. After all, one has only to recall the many social-problem films (mainly from the Warner's studio) of the 30's to realize that images of civic corruption are nothing new on the screen, or only recall the famous last shot ("I steal") of *I Was a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* to remind oneself of how dark a view of American society could be taken. Indeed, *The Maltese Falcon* itself is in its way (though the character of Spade is somewhat softened from the novel) quite as thoroughgoing in its pessimism as is *Chinatown*.

What, rather, *Chinatown* has perceived is that one cannot make the private-eye genre work again (chiefly because of changed assumptions about the character and morality of the detective hero) by updating it, by making it "relevant," but only by keeping it at a distance. Thus (or so one thinks through most of the movie) the period setting, which distances the film's characters and events from us just enough to keep those modern assumptions at bay, and to make the film itself seem, like *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep*, larger than life and from another era. Or so one thinks, that is, until one finally comes to see that what the period setting has allowed *Chinatown* to do (which is to say, what *Chinatown* has had the intelligence and wit to do, having, after all, made its own opportunities) is to use the private-detective genre to make a myth about the very inception of that place with which, thanks mainly to Chandler, it's so inextricably associated. This isn't to say that *Chinatown* is in any sense a sour anti-Los Angeles film like *The Long Goodbye*, but rather one offering an almost elegiacal view of a Los Angeles that once was, a Los Angeles seen (in John A. Alonzo's beautiful photography) bathed in a pre-smog golden haze, whose creation (along with the seeds of its destruction) is imagined as a myth (not without some parallels in the city's actual history) of the clashing of a race of corrupt Prometheans, alternately possessing, bestowing, and then stealing back the earth's water and power. And who could make a better tour guide than a private eye on an odyssey through the sun-drenched regions of that nether world from which the Los Angeles we now know has sprung?

* And, indeed, I'm unable to recall any other films but *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Big Sleep* in which Bogart, whom one tends to think of as the archetypal 40's private eye, actually plays a private detective.

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But it's not simply the originality of this conception that distinguishes *Chinatown* from past private-eye films, and roots it unmistakably in the present. The ending of *The Maltese Falcon* may be as dark as *Chinatown*, but it's also different, and, in some ways, more like that of *The Long Goodbye* than either of them is like *Chinatown*, in that Gould's Marlowe, for all his bumbling, finally solves his case, and proves, as much as Spade and all previous Marlowes, the instrument for punishing wrongdoing and meting out justice. Though the ending of *Chinatown* takes place in Los Angeles's Chinatown, for a time it seemed the film would never get (and never need to get) there, so much had "Chinatown" long before become a metaphor for the impenetrable nature of that morass into which its private-detective hero finds himself sinking. Chinatown, where the hero once found himself stationed while on the police force (before the events of the film have begun) and where he became involved in some obscure disaster, is, as he says, a place where you can't understand what's happening; and, in the world of this film, Chinatown is everywhere. Unlike Spade and Marlowe, Nicholson's J. J. Gittes, for all his cleverness and professional skill, loses his case, gets in over his head. And, in a curious way, the sense of his failure that one takes away from this film, which is apparently no more in either ambition or accomplishment than a brilliant entertainment, seems to speak to us with a peculiar immediacy. For much as it's been said that one sees in Los Angeles an adumbrative image of America itself, so, too, does one recognize in Nicholson's Jake Gittes, far more than in *Badlands*' abstracted mass murderer, an image of a distinctively American everyman, at large in his society. Abrasively cocky but immensely likable, craftily resourceful in his work but personally open and ingenuous, filled with conviction about his own moral justifications and about the possibility of wrongs being set right, he nevertheless finds himself in over his head, adrift in a place where things aren't what they seem, where one can't understand what's happening.

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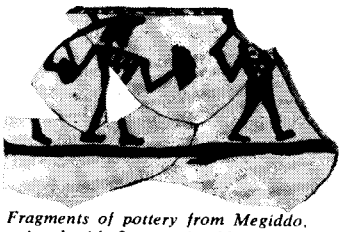

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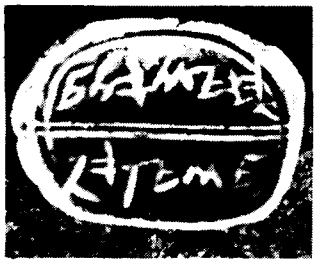

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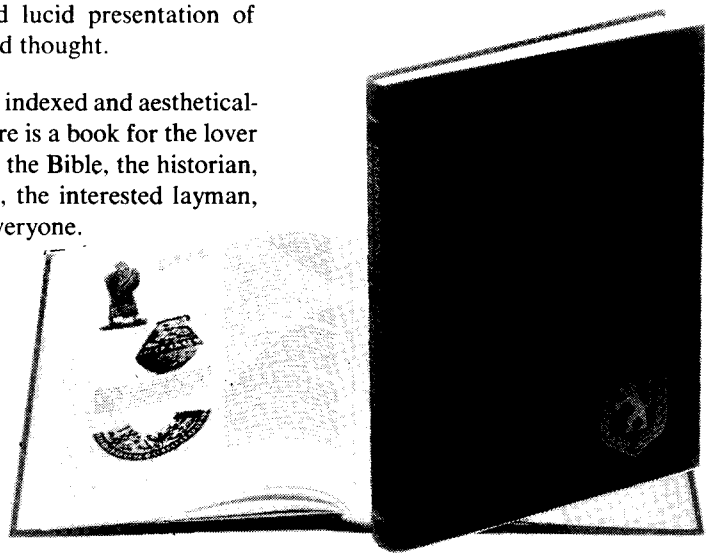

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Vested Interests

Ralph A. Raimi

All my childhood was spent among Communists, in Detroit, Michigan, U.S.A. When I was six I went with my mother to spend a few days in a cabin on the outskirts of a place called Workers Camp, a summer camp for children. I was too young to be a full member, but my older brother saluted the red flag every morning and sang the "Internationale" while I watched from a distance, aching to be old enough to participate. The words as I heard them are still fresh in my mind:

'Tis the final cornflake,
Let each stand in his place . . .

My understanding was dim. In my secular school of the winter season I similarly memorized the familiar

One nation invisible with liberty
And justice for all.

I could believe anything.

I believed in the wickedness of the Vested Interests, of course. My brother explained Surplus Value to me: The bosses pay the workers less than the value of their labor, stealing the difference with the aid of policemen and injunctions. That difference is called Surplus Value. Since the workers can't buy back their product, having been paid less than its value, the bosses have to find other markets for their goods. Thus Imperialism, serving the dual function of creating a cheap source of raw materials and labor.

Foreign workers, I was told, were notoriously underpaid. (So were Americans, who worked in sweatshops, but this was not part of the foreign-trade discussion.) Therefore imports were cheap, undercutting American prices, especially of union-made goods. Tariffs and strikes were needed to prevent this.

It was not explained to me how the underpaid foreign workers could, via Imperialism, be forced to buy the surplus goods our own workers couldn't "buy back." There were other inconsistencies that troubled my rather mathematical mind, especially as my sixth year gave way to my seventh, eighth, and ninth.

Reading the *Daily Worker*, which occupied a good part of the first years of my literacy, didn't seem to help. The same few elementary lessons, much as my brother had given them to me, were there repeated time and again, but with no greater depth than the first time around.

There were cartoons, too, as if humor, however uncongenial to the Communist spirit, must have its due. The recurrent themes and caricatures were pretty much drawn from *Krokodil*, I learned later, though they were supposed to have their roots in American experience as firmly as Skeezix and Dagwood Bumstead. The resulting wit was a bit strained.

Most easily remembered was a figure in frock coat and top hat, a vest with many buttons, crossed by a heavy watch chain hung in two comfortable catenaries. He was well-fed, this nameless gentleman, and looked like William Howard Taft except when his head was replaced with the drooling countenance of a wolf or other predator.

Usually pictured in the company of two bulging duffel bags marked $$$, he represented the Bosses without question, and the duffel bags obviously contained Surplus Value. Even the fact that he invariably wore a vest was not fortuitous, whatever sort of head his silk hat surmounted: he and his kind were the Vested Interests.

Schwab, Schwab, Charlie Schwab,
Life and Happiness you rob—
From the workers in the mills
To the miners in the hills.

The moral choice was not difficult; despite my troubled understanding, I knew which side I was on. The man in the silk hat must no longer grind the faces of the poor, and the People must rule in his place. This can be done: In Soviet Union they are doing so, no? So much for 1930.

Now many years have passed. Old Isaac Smullin, who founded Workers Camp, lived (alas) to see the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and worse. For my part, I learned that "vesting" has more than sartorial significance.

I belong by virtue of my employment to a retirement plan which has the feature that all my contributions, and the contributions of my employer, are vested in myself. That is, whatever that annuity account is worth today, it belongs to me. I shall draw from it on an appropriate actuarial basis beginning at my retirement whether I keep my present job or quit it, or displease my employer and am fired, or displease my neighbors and go to jail. Though I should be hanged as a traitor, my heirs and assigns will receive its ("death benefit") value according to my direction.

Not every pension plan works this way, as has been made clear in recent Congressional hearings into the subject. Many a worker has contributed, often via union checkoff, to a company or union-organized plan, and found that he lost all benefits if he quit his job before fifteen years' service, or the company went out of business, or the union fund was badly managed or actuarially unsound. Often his payments were attractively low, causing him to believe his plan had some special virtue, when the real reason was that the plan's managers knew the pay-off would be to many fewer people than had contributed.

This kind of plan is the opposite of a vested interest; it makes the insured dependent on the good will of his employer or his union.

RALPH A. RAIMI, *here making his first appearance in these pages, is professor of mathematics at the University of Rochester.*

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or it limits his mobility. The title is not in him, but in a collective of some sort, like old-age pensions in Russia. The thought of a retired Russian emigrating to Israel and subsisting on old-age pension checks from Moscow gives one to smile, but I can do the corresponding thing when my times comes, if I like.

The Soviet Union, it should be observed, operates in this way not merely with respect to retirement income or medical care, but with respect to absolutely everything: job, house, liberty itself. None of these is in the absolute possession of its holder. Let once the jobholder signal his desire to emigrate—not that this is the only sin against the state—and his job, his apartment, his mobility are gone. Even in normal circumstances, his vacation—two weeks in the Crimea, say—may be a feature of his job; he takes a train with a group of fellow workers. Much of what he has is "on the house," privilege as easily revoked as given. What he "owns" is a fiefdom; he is in thrall to the collective.

I WOULD not wish to set up too sharp a distinction between Russian collectivity and American individual liberty. Each country has elements of the other's style, if not its formal system. Sinclair Lewis (*Main Street*) and Ring Lardner ("Haircut"), for example, have showed how illusory even American liberty is in some respects. We may have legal title to bank account and automobile, but the good opinion of our neighbors may be necessary to any use of these benefits. This lesson is a recurrent theme in American literature; we have seen it in John O'Hara's *Appointment in Samarra* and, more recently, in the film *Easy Rider*, where the young men with offensive haircuts are simply murdered by representatives of an outraged community.

On the other hand, this theme is not a recurrent one in Soviet-Russian literature—it doesn't appear at all. That alone should be proof that while American individual liberty has its troubles, Russian liberty of this kind hardly exists and is certainly not accorded to writers. We have enough independent knowledge of this, too, in the cases of Daniel, Sinyavsky, Pasternak, and Solzhenitsyn, not to have to belabor the point. But the fact that Solzhenitsyn could exist at all, write, and be printed, at least abroad, shows that there is a chink in the armor of Russian collectivism corresponding to the slight imperfection of American liberty. No system is perfect.

The question is, which way are we headed? Will the struggle between the collective ideal and the ideal of individual liberty continue, or end in a victory or in a compromise? There is a popular theory which speaks of a convergence of American and Soviet ways. Generally it is the two economic systems these theorists are thinking of, and they have some evidence for convergence in the relative growth of the public sector in the economies of the "capitalist" nations in recent years. The corresponding evidence of growth of the private sector in Russia is, however, missing, and the Russian attitude toward opening up the economic system in Hungary and Czechoslovakia (1956-68) shows that the convergence, if it does take place, will not be to a point midway between our two systems.

I believe that our convergence will be in the same direction in other areas of human activity as well. To be brief, collectivism will win. I don't like the prospect and I shall fight against it, but I see very little hope.

Though it is a tired analogy, I can think of nothing better than the decline and fall of the Roman empire to illustrate our present position. I know perfectly well that in Europe in the year 400 C.E. (say) there was no clear-cut struggle between the forces of darkness and the forces of light. Rome was already half-Christian; France was half-Roman. The defenders of the old order supported an increasingly gloomy and pointless tyranny while the barbarians fought for liberty of a sort—certainly for self-determination.

Yet had I been there, on the Rhine or on the Po, I would have struck my blow for a few more years of literacy, music, and paved highways before the inevitable darkness came down upon Europe.

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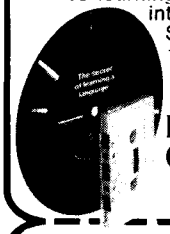
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Darkness? To many a mind it was light. Within a century or two the word of Christ's sacrifice had penetrated every corner of Europe —and indeed, if one takes a largish view of Mohammed's teaching, to every corner of the Mediterranean as well, as far as even Alexander had carried the teaching of Aristotle. Gone was that large domain of social anarchy that had disturbed, enlivened, and enriched the ancient Mediterranean; in its place was the new Christian Europe, where all was fixed in duty, custom, and the will of God.

So perfect was the spirit of community—at least where the theory of feudalism was well observed—that a man hardly owned the shirt on his back, much less land, gold, or stores of wheat, except at the pleasure of his lord. The serf was tied to the property, the lord to the service of his prince, and the prince to the Church. No interest, no wealth, no expectation was vested in an individual. All was community: land used at the discretion of the community, prices set at the community level of fairness, wages (if any) the same. Whatever was not forbidden was compulsory, and above all was the obligation to believe in the truth of the Church and the religious necessity of the feudal order.

Most people were poor, of course, since technology was primitive and large numbers of servants of the Church and the military were not engaged in producing goods, but poverty was not as synonomous with despair as it became during the Industrial Revolution. The community cared for its aged and its ill, as much as was possible, and protected its members from the loneliness that must have been known in ancient cities as it is in modern cities too. The only cost was collectivism, an ideal best exemplified in the monastery system which grew up later in the age of faith. One gave up all title to property and thoughts of one's own, to win a world both here and hereafter.

That world was the monk's very own world, in some sense, but the ownership was not vested in him as an individual. He could not resign and take his share away with him. If he changed his mind on some important point of politics or religion, he could lose that share of collective ownership he enjoyed, and maybe his life.

So with the serf, the baron, and the king. Kings too were known to walk barefoot in the Alpine snow for penance, or (in legend) to change places with their own court jesters, magically, and learn the meaning of abasement. "He hath struck down the mighty from their seats and exalted those of low degree," was the lesson taught Robert of Sicily.

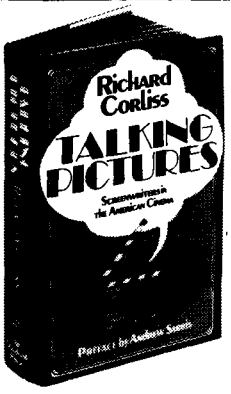
There were exceptions; there are always exceptions. Like the rat who ("stout as Julius Caesar") swam to the far side of the Weser, avoiding the fate his fellows met dancing to the Pied Piper's tune, there survived some remnants of antique individualism through even the darkest years of Christendom. A handful of traveling clowns and troubadours, the shifting enclaves of miscreant Jews, a few seamen, merchants, pirates, highwaymen—who could tell them apart?

Usury was a crime as grave as murder, but some money was lent and borrowed just the same. A merchant who bought at one price and sold at a higher was in danger of at least his immortal soul, maybe an *auto-da-fé*, but he was never quite stamped out. The baker who in a famine year thought to get some wheat by paying more and raising his price for bread correspondingly—that baker might well have been destroyed by the righteous townsfolk, cast in some Godly dungeon, and his bakery burned. Still, the bakery would open again, perhaps under new management, but surely with a higher price list dictated by economic necessity.

There were exceptions, yes, but it was a hard choice: gold of one's own, but no protection of manor, monastery, or village. Few could afford to choose the path of liberty.

Those few who did grew in numbers with each century, until with the great Reformation and splintering of the Christian church, and with the crushing of the danger of Moslem invasion, the economic outlaws became a recognized necessity in society; guilds of merchants and manufacturers as valid in their way as manors and villages based on land. By the time of the Industrial Revolution it seemed that commerce had won the day. Even the laws of princes vested wealth in individuals. One could own his shirt, his house, his gold, his fleet of ships, and could set whatever price he wished on goods or services. Usury became interest, piracy became trade, and heresy became an ancient right of Englishmen.

Still—just as some ancient individualism lived in spirit through the Dark and Middle Ages, incubating like winter wheat until the sun returned, so has some medieval



TALKING PICTURES
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by Richard Corliss
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collectivism always survived the revolutions of Copernicus and Adam Smith. Mercantilism, the earliest attitude of princes toward the necessities of trade, was itself not quite the liberty Adam Smith urged on the future. The very guilds and unions which threaded the hope of liberty through the secular needle's-eye gradually turned into brakes on the progress of capitalism: Luddites destroyed machines just as food rioters had leveled bakeries six hundred years before.

PHILOSOPHERS and seers have never been wanting to extol the virtues of the collective over the entrepreneurial. What high-school student has not read Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village":

> Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

This was written in the 18th century in stalwart opposition to the very revolution in agriculture (and all other forms of productive enterprise) which was to end by banishing hunger in Britain. The poem celebrated the medieval ideal of commonality, an ideal that had never died.

Finally, just when the development of free commerce was marking its greatest triumphs, the collective ideal was finding in Karl Marx its mightiest voice since Jesus.

The symmetry is not as complete as this; if it were, human history would truly be as cyclical as Spengler imagined, successive waves of collectivism and individualism, the seed of each surviving the fruiting of the other. In fact, history does not repeat itself wholly, or at any rate does not seem to have done so yet. I doubt that the typical merchant of ancient Rome was as free of his prince as a merchant of 17th-century Holland, or any ancient artist as sure of his bank account as Franz Hals. The modern vesting of wealth and consequent freedom of choice in an individual—in every individual who wished it—was almost a new development in social history.

It may be, in the same way, that the loss of these rights is and will be more complete in the collectives of the 20th and 21st centuries than it ever was in the feudal manor, or even under the Benedectine Rule. The medieval Jew could still carry his Torah to Germany when England expelled him. The Gypsy might steal an occasional child or horse and hide successfully in a neighboring forest, fearing only wolves and boars, and then with the coming of autumn move south. A pirate could have his ship, his island sanctuary, and his dream of booty.

But the hero of *The Little Golden Calf*, that prescient Bolshevik satire of 1924, could only look sadly at each village train station and say to himself, "This is most assuredly not Rio de Janeiro." That man devoted his life to the fraudulent accumulation of a million rubles, but could find no place to spend them. One supposes he could with some effort have bought, over the years, a million copies of *Anna Karenina* and thrown them into Lake Baikal, but not much more.

NOT only is today's wave of collectivism more complete than its predecessor, but the remaining seed of its alternative falls on ever stonier soil. Technology alone in its modern advance assures this result; indeed, I believe it assures in the long run the ultimate and permanent victory of the collective ideal.

The pity is that the collective is what most people want. Even when freedom is greatest, in Jane Austen's England or Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, we can observe the way people who could have done otherwise rush together to get one another's approval and to revile and punish the misfit. In a true legal collective—in the Massachusetts of Increase Mather—that misfit had no rights and was put to death. In liberal America the misfit had a vote and a bank account, could sell his house and move out of town; but still he could be made to suffer, even be hounded to death. Even the liberal society has its lust for community, never entirely put down.

Imagine, then, a society where leaving town or leaving the country is as futile a move toward anonymity as moving next door would have been on Lewis's *Main Street*. Consider what we now have in the way of convenience: credit cards, drivers' licenses, tax receipts, liability insurance. The mail, the telephone, and finally the computer have made it possible for us to combine all our discrete identities under one great Identification Number. Social Security, workman's compensation, Medicare, bank deposits, and monthly payments can all be made on the same keyboard that can print out our photographs, fingerprints, and credit ratings.

What would the medieval manor have done with all this? What news could the troubador have brought from the next county that was not already known? His arrival would have been no surprise, and his songs but a rough version of the latest discs on the radio. With piracy put down and shipwreck practically unknown, how could proud merchants arise? Getters of goods would have been only another class of vassal.

This time around we will have the ability to accomplish and enforce what has always been the true majority desire. "'Tis the final conflict." Quite so, final because overwhelming.

Individual liberty has, after all, been a rare phenomenon in human history. A few people in Europe, during a couple of relatively brief stretches of time. Compared to the millennia of Egyptian and Babylonian formalism, the "cycles of Cathay," they have been but a moment, and an accidental moment at that. Very likely the ants and bees had such moments at some time in their own long evolution, before they found happiness in its final form.

No more vested interests. Power to the people. Peace.

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Interest Groups in America

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS. By JAMES Q. WILSON. *Basic Books. 236 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by JEANE KIRKPATRICK

As RECENTLY as a decade ago discussion of American government by political scientists was dominated (though never preempted) by a set of interlocking propositions then called pluralism. Although it resembled an updated version of utilitarianism in which self-interested groups replaced competing individuals, government served as a visible hand harmonizing the clash of interests, and political democracy was the resulting greatest good of the greatest number, the pluralist synthesis rested not on doctrine but on the investigations and interpretations of a number of first-rate political scientists: David Truman provided an influential statement of interest-group theory, Charles Lindblom explained how policy was made in a divided system, V. O. Key documented the heterogeneous, decentralized character of the American party system, the authors of *The American Voter* depicted the electorate as uninformed and uninvolved but nonetheless capable of bestirring itself to vote parties in and out of the White House, Robert Dahl illustrated the pluralist character of decision-making in New Haven and, in addition, related the whole pattern to the designs of the Founding Fathers. The work of many other empirically oriented political scientists including Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson confirmed, complemented, and reinforced the view that the American political system was one in which government reflected and regulated the continuing competition for influence of interest groups, in which the influence on public policy of each self-interested group was limited by the countervailing power of others, in which political majorities were really unstable coalitions of minorities, and in which a relatively passive electorate exercised an important restraining influence on government by way of the politicians' fear of being turned out of office.

The practice of describing American politics in this fashion offended more than a few. The pluralist analysis led, sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly, to the conclusion that American government was in fact democratic, a view that was obnoxious to all those convinced that America was dominated by a unified "power elite." The belief that there existed a plurality of interest was objectionable to Marxists and quasi-Marxists who saw only a two-sided class struggle. The view that the policy process and the power structure were even appropriate subjects for investigation was unacceptable to all who believed the existence of a ruling class to be self-evident. The absence of any overarching conception of the public good was repellent to a mixed constituency of conservatives, liberals, and radicals. Moreover, after the growing alienation of intellectuals set in, it was charged with increasing frequency and stridence that pluralism was functionally conservative and objectively counterrevolutionary.

To the politics of the late 60's pluralist theory seemed increasingly irrelevant. The rise of mass movements and ideological politics and the declining emphasis on economic issues called, or seemed to call, for new approaches and new explanations. Moods and movements temporarily eclipsed groups and "interests" with the result that in the last few years pluralist theory and its characteristic preoccupation —the organized interest group—has received little attention from students of politics.

It is for this reason that Harvard political scientist, James Q. Wilson, begins his new book, *Political Organizations,* with the comment that "some readers will find it strange that in the 1970's a book about American politics should have as its focus the behavior of organizations, especially those organizations that are sometimes called 'lobbies' and 'pressure groups.'"

REALITY rarely changes as rapidly as intellectual fashions, and organized groups did not wither away because political scientists turned their attention elsewhere. Wilson does not suggest that the role of interest groups in American politics is what it once was. He is as aware as any of us that there have been multiplying symptoms of fundamental change in the American system and that the impact on politics of economic and other interest groups has been modified by the growing importance of ideas, personality, style, and the role of the mass media. Ten years ago no one would have predicted, Wilson says, for example, that "one of the most powerful industrial groupings in the nation, producing a product sought and cherished by tens of millions of Americans and including within its ranks the second largest corporation in the world, would almost effortlessly have been made subject to highly restrictive regulation as to the kind of product it could produce, and all this without any mass expression of distaste for the products it was already producing. Yet the Highway Safety Act became law over the strenuous objections of General Motors, and Ralph Nader, the man who was primarily responsible for forcing this legislation, acted with no organization of any kind."

Still, Wilson reminds us, organizations, especially voluntary ones, play an enormously important role in politics because so many of the persons active in politics are spokesmen for and representatives of organizations. Even movements and moods must be organized if

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Selected and introduced by
CLAUDE G. MONTEFIORE and HERBERT LOEWE

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THE AUTHORS: Claude G. Montefiore was an important figure in British Liberal Judaism and the author of many scholarly works. Herbert Loewe was reader in Rabbinics at Cambridge University.

From **A RABBINIC ANTHOLOGY**

"To every judge who judges truly, even for an hour, the Scripture reckons it as if he had been a partner with God in the work of creation."

"R. Judah said in the name of Rab: He who has to say the *Shema* while he is out walking must stand still, and receive the Kingdom of Heaven. And what is the Kingdom of Heaven? The Lord our God, the Lord is One."

"Let a man love God with a perfect love, whether it go well with him or ill."

"R. Elazar said: The whole Torah depends upon justice. Therefore God gave enactments about justice (Exod. XXI, 1) immediately after the Ten Commandments, because men transgress justice, and God punishes them, and He teaches the inhabitants of the world. Sodom was not overthrown till the men of Sodom neglected justice, and the men of Jerusalem were not banished till they disregarded justice (Ezek. XVI, 49; Isa. I, 23)."

"When Law came into the world, freedom came into the world."

"Even though Israel be in exile among the nations, if they occupy themselves with Torah, it is as though they were not in exile."

"'Many waters cannot quench love' (Cant. VIII, 7). If the idolatrous nations of the world were to unite to destroy the love between God and Israel, they would be unable to do so."

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they are to have more than a fleeting impact on events. Organization, Wilson believes, not only structures political action and enhances its effectiveness but its imperatives have an influence on political behavior and political outcomes. This is, he tells us, the central theme of the book: "That the behavior of persons who lead or speak for an organization can best be understood in terms of their efforts to maintain and enhance the organization and their position in it."

For social scientists to understate both their goals and their achievements is conventional. Wilson exemplifies this ritual modesty with carefully circumscribed statements of intention and conclusions. His purpose, he tells us, is not to explore the future of American politics or to assess the relative importance of organizations and other factors in determining policy. Neither is it to offer a theory of politics or even of organizations, but only to provide "a perspective" on one important element of politics. Yet in fact, this new book is far more than a study of organizational incentives, leadership, and strategies, and more than an essay on the impact of organization on politics. It also illuminates many other aspects of politics, public policy, and the history of our times. In it Wilson demonstrates not only a sweeping mastery of the literature on organizations, but also of the public-policy process and various more or less related topics, including the behavior of American intellectuals. In fact the book treats so many subjects and makes so many illuminating points that it is impossible in a review to do justice either to its scope or erudition. I shall therefore comment on only a few themes which have broad implications for the future of American politics.

Two of these have been dealt with by Wilson in earlier works and are further developed here. One concerns the declining prestige and importance of material incentives in politics (and society) and the increased importance of purposive incentives. The second concerns the social correlates of political participation. Each of these subjects has important implications for organizational behavior and, though Wilson does not say so, in combination they constitute the foundation of a promising theory of American politics.

That those who staffed the political machines were motivated above all by the hope of personal material rewards was established by Wilson and Banfield in their study *City Politics* and confirmed by the work of several other political scientists. All agreed that the persons attracted by these rewards were of relatively low socioeconomic status, that they were relatively unconcerned about policy and candidates, and that both they and the "bosses" who hired them belonged to a vanishing species. In *The Amateur Democrat*, a book on political clubs in three American cities, Wilson described a new political breed attracted to politics not by the hope of material gain, or by the search for companionship and solidarity, but because of enthusiasm for particular policies or a point of view which they sought to have adopted by government. Others also commented on this new middle-class style of politics, which was to be observed most typically in the political clubs of the Northeast and Far West, in the Democratic parties of Minnesota and Wisconsin, and in certain affluent suburbs. This particular style of volunteer politics was usually practiced by the college-educated who had (or said they had) more concern with moral than with economic questions, more interest in policy than in party, more dedication to general principles than to winning specific elections.

Since there is a strong tendency in enlightened circles to regard any impersonal goal as morally superior to any self-interested motive, it should perhaps be mentioned that Wilson does not regard purposive incentives to political action as "higher" or "better" than other motives for such participation. Here as in earlier works he emphasizes that moral motives do not necessarily lead to moral results, in part because the motives of an individual's action do not determine the social function of that action. What they do determine is the character of organizations based on one or another set of motives. Thus, a party comprising mainly persons who seek material rewards through political action will try hard to win elections for the obvious reason that to the victors go the spoils. It will emphasize issues and adopt policies attractive to the largest number of voters and will choose the candidate most likely to win. On the other hand, a party based largely on purposive incentives would rather be right than victorious and would prefer to lose with a candidate holding the correct ideology than to win with someone else.

Wilson makes little reference in this book to the recent history of the Democratic party, though it is painfully clear that at least since 1968 that party has been the arena of a major struggle between Democrats with different conceptions of what a party should be and do and how it should be organized. He does note that recent party reforms have had the effect of strengthening the position of persons and groups with purposive goals and weakening that of traditional organizations based on traditional material and solidary incentives. Presumably the reformed reforms adopted by the Democratic National Committee for the 1976 convention and supported by that fascinating coalition of purposive types—the Wallaceites and the blacks—will further strengthen policy-oriented, ideological, and redemptive groups and continue the transformation of the Democratic party into an instrument of upper-middle-class professionals.

Political participation is not equally interesting to persons of all socioeconomic classes. There is a large body of research proving that persons with relatively high-status occupations, high incomes and educations are far more likely than members of the working class, the lower class, or even the lower-middle class to join organizations, especially organizations that do not promise concrete material rewards. Wilson reviews this literature and reminds us that upper socioeconomic groups not only have the time, money, and skills needed to be effective in organizations but also the necessary inclinations: the sense of collective identity and duty, the ego strength, and the long-range perspectives necessary to make joining organizations at-

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tractive. Lower-class persons are less likely to have either the economic, the social, or the psychological resources. Revolutionary rhetoric to the contrary, the lower classes—at least in the modern period—do not rise up. Not only does the leadership for lower-class movements typically come from the middle class, but lower-class persons are extremely difficult to mobilize except where there is a realistic chance of quick tangible rewards or where an attractive redemptive creed is reinforced by strong solidary appeals. Needless to say, reform politics offers neither personal gain nor salvation.

PERHAPS out of charity Wilson withholds comment on the persistent, suspiciously self-serving blindness of middle-class reformers to the relations between social structure and political organization. But he provides all the facts and the insights needed to explain the apparent paradox: that reforms which purge the political process in the effort to increase participatory democracy result only in extending the political power of people like the reformers themselves. The disinclination of lower-class, working-class, lower-middle-class persons, and, indeed, of everyone except college-educated purposive types to participate in organizations with long-range, relatively abstract goals and cosmopolitan perspectives means that any reform which aims at increasing participation by removing the influence of material and solidary rewards will achieve only the increased participation of more middle-class professionals and the further decline of the already low participation of other classes—unless those reforms are reinforced with quotas and similarly coercive devices. In fact, it is possible that even quotas cannot overcome these class characteristics. The 1972 Democratic experience which produced unprecedented numbers of black professionals, female professionals, young soon-to-be professionals, and very few members of the working classes, suggests that, at best, class characteristics are unaffected by reforms aimed at representing hitherto "disadvantaged" and "underrepresented" groups.

With his customary dryness Wilson comments on the difficulties confronting efforts to change entrenched patterns of participation:

> The extent to which altering either the structure of politics or the rewards of politicians will result in the organization of previously unorganized groups is problematic. . . . Whether governmentally stimulated organization, such as a community action agency or a model cities board, can outlast the governmental support and become either a regular part of a city's decision-making system or an independent voluntary association is not yet known. In particular, whether changes in political access can overcome the impediments to organizational formation created by class characteristics remains to be seen.

THE quiet tone and rather flat style of *Political Organizations* belie the controversial character of many of the author's views and interpretations. Like his former teacher, Edward Banfield, to whom this book is dedicated, Wilson is a man who "thinks otherwise." This book attacks many of the accepted truths of the moment, but the attacks are conducted so quietly that only the careful reader will be aware of the deadly precision of the author's aim. Prominent among his targets are Marxism, scholarly pretensions, and oversimplifications of all kinds—his approach is unusually serious and doggedly non-ideological. No cliché, no currently prestigious explanation is allowed to pass unexamined. There is, for example, a discussion of violence as an organizational strategy in which Wilson, in a few carefully constructed paragraphs, obliterates many of today's most influential explanations of political violence. He reminds readers, first, that collective violence is "periodic, localized, and limited," then adds: "There is violence at some periods but not at others, and thus, explanations based on enduring social conditions (such as class stratification, the economic system, poverty, or ethnic competition) are not especially helpful—if these conditions were the determinative ones, violence would be more or less continuous."

Even organizations do not escape Wilson's determined effort to whittle social phenomena down to size. Although their continued importance is the assumption on which the book is based, he insists that their powers are, after all, quite limited: by the political ethos, by the opinions of members and nonmembers, by the chronic problems of organizational survival, all of which are exacerbated in a period when institutionalization (called bureaucratization by its critics) seems suspect to so many.

Tacit warnings occur throughout the book: warnings about careless reformers, mistaken doctrines, fraudulent rhetoric, about the rapid expansion of government policy and the proliferation of client groups which make it "difficult to change, and impossible to abandon policies once they are adopted." With a final swipe at one group of critics of pluralism, he asserts that the competition of interest groups "does not, in the long run, make it difficult for the government to start doing things, it only makes it difficult for the government to stop."

CLEARLY, Wilson is not among those who feel that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, but the problems and pitfalls which concern him are not those which have been most publicized in our times. He is as worried about remedies as about ills. All methods of aggregating interests and expressing them in the policy process seem to him imperfect. The "mobilization of small constituencies" underrepresents the unorganized, the "politics of mass mobilization" provides an unusual opportunity for demagogues.

It was just such a sense of imperfect alternatives, fallible policymakers, and unanticipated and uncontrollable consequences that made dispersed power, "disjoint incrementalism," and the pluralist solution seem attractive in the first place. Perhaps we are coming full circle and are nearly ready to turn our attention back from the search for purity to the concrete possibilities and limitations of the political process. Such a transition is facilitated by Wilson's new book which constitutes a valuable addition to our knowledge of the real world.

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Literary Onanism

MY LIFE AS A MAN. By PHILIP ROTH. *Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 330 pp. $8.25.*

Reviewed by JOHN W. ALDRIDGE

IN 1961, Philip Roth published in these pages a remarkable essay entitled "Writing American Fiction" which attracted considerable attention at the time and has since come to be regarded as something of a classic critical statement. The essay was written with all the self-assurance and high moral severity one could expect to find in a young writer who had been rather extravagantly overpraised for his first book and who might be forgiven for considering himself qualified to sit in judgment upon his elders and contemporaries. What impresses one most in re-reading it today is the accuracy with which Roth was able to diagnose the more serious problems facing the writer of fiction in contemporary society and to forecast developments such as black humor, the New Journalism, and fictionalized autobiography which in 1961 were barely emergent as major literary trends. But the essay has also taken on over the years a certain poignant dimension. For in predicting the future course of American fiction in the 60's and 70's and castigating some of his fellow writers for the creative adjustments they had made, or failed to make, to the dilemma he described, Roth unwittingly prophesied the course of his own future career as a novelist. Most of the errors and evasions of artistic responsibility which he detected in the work of others were to be precisely those to which he himself was later to succumb.

The most widely quoted observation in the essay has to do with the writer's feelings of bafflement and frustration when confronted with the grotesque improbability of most of the events of contemporary life. ". . .[T]he American writer in

JOHN W. ALDRIDGE, *professor of English at the University of Michigan, is the author of several volumes of criticism, most recently* The Devil in the Fire: Retrospective Essays on American Literature and Culture, 1951-1971.

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the middle of the 20th century has his hands full in trying to understand, and then describe, and then make *credible* much of the American reality. It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one's own meager imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents. . . ." Roth then proceeded to discuss the work of certain of his contemporaries and to find in much of it evidence of a failure to engage the American reality—an inevitable failure, he believed, because "what will be [the writer's] subject? His landscape? It is the tug of reality, its mystery and magnetism, that leads one into the writing of fiction —what then when one is not mystified but stupefied? not drawn but repelled? It would seem that what we might get would be a high proportion of historical novels or contemporary satire—or perhaps just nothing. No books."

Roth cited Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself* as the expression of "a despair so great that the man who bears it, or is borne by it, seems for the time being . . . to have given up on making an imaginative assault upon the American experience, and has become instead the champion of a kind of public revenge"—exactly the kind, one might propose, that Roth himself has been taking upon the public through various of his later novels as his own power to assault the American experience has steadily declined.

Later in the essay he criticized Salinger for creating characters whose sole response to the contemporary world is to have nervous breakdowns or commit suicide or retreat into a specious mysticism, while Malamud's characters seemed to him to be people who exist outside the realities of the current historical situation and who function as metaphors for general human possibilities rather than as representations of existing social types. Roth next accused Bellow and Styron of imaginative falsification, most notably in *Henderson the Rain King* and *Set This House on Fire* where the action is resolved in gestures or statements of unearned optimism and philosophical affirmation. Herbert Gold particularly troubled Roth because Gold, in his view, was the perfect example of the writer so completely turned away from the contemporary scene that he is left with nothing but his narcissism. In Gold's work "there is a good deal of delight in the work of his own hand. And, I think, with the hand itself"—a statement which, coming from a man who was later to write *Portnoy's Complaint,* the most hand-infatuated novel in American literary history, is surely rich in ironic portent.

Roth again might have been displaying prescience about his own future creative incarnations, this time as the author of *My Life as a Man,* in his final comments on Gold:

> [His] extravagant prose, his confessional tone (the article about divorce; then the several prefaces and appendices about his own divorce—my ex-wife says this about me, etc.; then finally the story about divorce)—all of this seems to have meaning to me in terms of this separation . . . , the not-so-friendly relationship between the writer and the culture. . . . I must say I am not trying to sell selflessness. . . . The writer pushes before our eyes . . . personality, in all its separateness and specialness. Of course the mystery of personality is nothing less than the writer's ultimate concern . . . at its worst, however, as a form of literary onanism, it seriously curtails the fictional possibilities, and may perhaps be thought of, and sympathetically so, as a symptom of the writer's loss of the community as subject . . . it may be that when the [cultural] predicament produces in the writer not only feelings of disgust, rage, and melancholy but impotence too, he is apt to lose heart and finally . . . turn to other matters or to other worlds; or to the self, which may, in a variety of ways, become his subject or even the impulse for his technique. What I have tried to point out is that the sheer fact of self, the vision of self as inviolable, powerful, and nervy, self as the only real thing in an unreal environment, that that vision has given to some writers joy, solace, and muscle.

Roth's own decision to seek his subject through the exploration of

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self, in particular within the narcissistic imperatives of the self at war with the derangements of contemporary life, was to be made some years after these sentences were written, and it proved to be the crucial and determining act of his later career.

GIVEN his premises as stated in the essay and his perhaps excessive sensitivity to the social conditions in which the creative imagination is obliged to function, there was undoubtedly no other decision he could have made. For ten years following the appearance of *Goodbye, Columbus* in 1959, Roth struggled to find a form that would contain and objectify his sternly adversary vision of American culture, and in his two massive novels of the early and middle 60's, *Letting Go* and *When She Was Good,* he experimented with greater effectiveness than is generally recognized with the traditional form of the realistic social novel. But the difficulty of this form for Roth was that it demanded a sense of thematic coherence which he did not possess as well as a social experience definable in terms of certain implicit concepts of communal order which, as he well knew, contemporary society did not possess. As a result, Roth found himself caught in a predicament which, to one degree or another, has confounded American writers ever since Melville: he had vast quantities of material, but he could not discover and possess a subject. All he could do was describe and document at infinite length the experiences of his characters, record every word of their interminable and mostly trivial conversations, and in that way produce a certain effect of life—busy, abrasive, vibrant, but finally one-dimensional and incoherent. It also became apparent in these novels that Roth suffered from two primary weaknesses that severely limited his ability to work successfully with objectively created characters in a realistically presented social milieu: he had no power to identify or sympathize with characters who were not to some degree extensions or idealizations of himself, and his natural tendency was to recoil in horror from contemporary experience and to treat it with the contempt of one who feels that he alone is worthy of salvation.

In short, on the evidence of these novels, it was clear that the form most congenial to Roth was the novel of narcissism, just as his strongest gift was for the tragicomedy of paranoia, and it happened that in *Portnoy's Complaint* he was able to coordinate form and gift to extraordinary effect. Yet there was still a lingering urge in Roth to make the kind of direct assault on the social and political realities of our time which in his essay he had criticized some of his contemporaries for failing to make. He accordingly produced after *Portnoy's Complaint* three very different and very bad novels: *Our Gang,* a heavy-handed and adolescent satire of the Nixon administration which only verified the truth of Roth's observation that "the actuality is continually outdoing our talents," particularly when the actuality is Richard Nixon; *The Breast,* a baffling and pretentious scrap of psychological fantasy that is ghoulish in its tastelessness; and *The Great American Novel,* an even more baffling melange of hyperkinetic writing about the mythology of baseball. Clearly, it was impossible for Roth to deal successfully in fiction with either the public realities or the various fantasy worlds of contemporary life, and the reasons were precisely those he had recognized in 1961. The experience of our time was stupefying and infuriating to the writer not merely because it was so often more incredible than anything he could imagine, but because it seemed to have no relation to the individual self. That, in fact, was the prime feature of its incredibility.

FOR a writer of Roth's particular talent and temperament there is only one reliable measure of credibility—what the self feels and thinks—and only one compelling interest—what the self experiences: in Roth's case, how events and people, especially women, have assaulted his sanity, thwarted or provoked his sexuality, and outraged his sense of moral virtue. This is the story he told in *Portnoy's Complaint,* and he tells it again in rather different terms in *My Life as a Man.* But the fact which in the former was partially obscured by the absorbing joys of book-length masturbation is here once again in full evidence: although Roth is a fine stylist and may be the funniest serious writer in America, he is gravely deficient in a sense of the novel form; he has no firm understanding of what his novels are supposed to mean; and he has no subject matter except fanatical self-infatuation.

His strategy this time is to try to convert these weaknesses into literary capital by making them part of the contrived architectural and thematic design of the novel. The theory behind this presumably is that an author is permitted to do anything in a novel provided he can convince the reader that he did it deliberately, in the service of some artistic intention, however obscure. Roth divides his narrative into two sections: the first purporting to be a fictional account written by a young novelist named Peter Tarnopol of the adventures of a young novelist named Nathan Zuckerman; the second presenting Tarnopol's ostensibly autobiographical account of actual experiences of his from which some of the events of the first section have been distilled. Throughout this monologue Tarnopol speculates continually about the relationship between his own life and that of his fictional alter ego, expresses bafflement at the complexity of the problem, and seems to be trying to create the impression that his (and Roth's) novel is really about the effort of the novelist to define and explore the connection between life and art. The writing of *My Life as a Man* would thus become for Roth-Tarnopol not only a search for but a *record of* the search for the novel's meaning; the life-art relationship is given dramatic objectification in the novel's two-part structure; and the expectation is that the novel's theme is to be discovered in Tarnopol's struggle to make fictional use of the materials of his life.

This technique of incorporating the author's creative difficulties into the work which is generating the difficulties is of course an old and familiar one, and so is the technique of bringing the author or his surrogate into the work and depicting him in the act of writing what one is in the act of reading. Gide, Huxley, Nabokov, and others have

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8 Books In One

Jaws of Victory

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Publisher's Weekly

2. Watergate

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The New York Times

3. McGovern

Among this book's unadvertised joys (along with a fascinating analysis of ethnic ticket-splitting in Chicago) are two fine chapters which describe the political disasters of the McGovern campaign in shattering detail while simultaneously conveying an understanding, even a sympathy, for a deeply religious senator who clung to his social convictions "with an intensity and tenacity that matched the enormity of his solitude."

Lou Cannon

4. Conservatives

One of the most perceptive political essays to be written on the conservative emergence that began in the 1960s.

The Minneapolis Star

5. Political Finance

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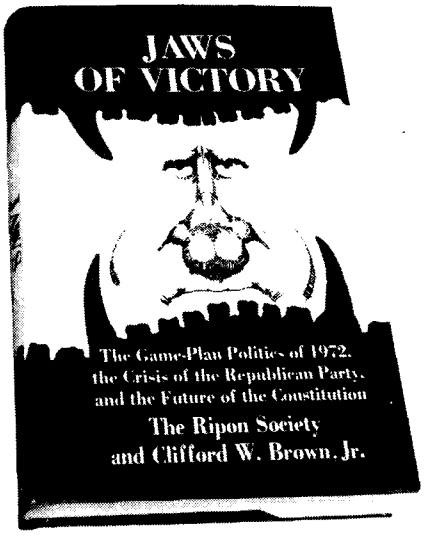
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made brilliant use of many variations of such devices and with them created an effect of conflicting illusion and reality which has formed one of the most common thematic perspectives of literary modernism. But in Roth's hands they become merely tricks employed to produce a mirage of complication evidently intended to conceal a feebleness of conception. There is actually no earned relationship between the fictional experiences of Zuckerman and the "real-life" experiences of Tarnopol; hence, there is no thematic justification for the presence of both men in the novel. Tarnopol might as well have devoted the entire novel to the story of his own life or Roth might have devoted it to the story of his. Whatever advantage he gained through the use of Tarnopol and Zuckerman may have been of some value in a defense against a charge of libel, but literarily it appears meaningless.

In addition to the complications of structure and the refracting perspectives of his fictional *personae*, Roth resorts to other devices in his effort to give the appearance of artistic deliberation to effects which he seems to have sensed might be viewed as artistic flaws. At one point in Tarnopol's narrative, for example, Roth introduces, and by introducing apparently hopes to forestall, an obvious criticism of his novel. Tarnopol has sent his brother Morris copies of the two stories which comprise the Zuckerman narrative, and Morris responds in part as follows:

> What is it with you Jewish writers? Madeleine Herzog, Deborah Rojack, the cutie-pie castrator in *After the Fall*, and isn't the desirable *shiksa* of *A New Life* a *kvetch* and titless in the bargain? And now, for the further delight of the rabbis and the reading public, Lydia Zuckerman, that Gentile tomato. Chicken soup in every pot, and a Grushenka in every garage. With all the Dark Ladies to choose from, you *luftmenschen* can really pick 'em. Peppy, why are you still wasting your talent on that Dead End Kid? Leave her to Heaven, okay? . . . Peppy, *enough with her already!*

Throughout the novel Tarnopol is repeatedly accused of fanatical preoccupation with his guilts, his Jewishness, his marriage, and his ego. His psychiatrist, Dr. Spielvogel, who is cutely resurrected from *Portnoy's Complaint*, considers him to be "among the nation's top young narcissists in the arts" and diagnoses his troubles as stemming from "narcissistic self-dramatization." He also writes him a letter of criticism of the Zuckerman stories. In fact, almost all the people in Tarnopol's life—his relatives, mistresses, students, wife—write him letters about the stories, and they call attention to shortcomings which Roth has had ample opportunity to discover his own writings possesses. But it is, after all, *Tarnopol's* writing which is being criticized, and because it is, Roth nearly succeeds in having it both ways. He can disarm critics by pointing out his artistic flaws before they do, and he can assign them to the work of a fictional writer who is not himself but to whom, as his creator, he is superior. The trouble is that there is actually no discernible difference between Tarnopol and Roth, just as there is no discernible reason except perhaps a legalistic one why Tarnopol rather than Roth should be acting as narrator. Tarnopol is never evaluated by Roth even though he is criticized by just about everybody else, and Roth never achieves sufficient dramatic distance from him to make it clear what he thinks and, therefore, what the reader is supposed to think about Tarnopol's character and behavior. There is, furthermore, no evidence that Tarnopol is intended to function as an untrustworthy narrator, the kind who is characterized by his errors of perception and extravagant responses. His is the only point of view in his story, and those moments when another might become authoritative and contradictory of his are never exploited —presumably because he and his creator are at all times in complete agreement.

My Life as a Man is, in short, a totally solipsistic novel, which may well make it a perfect expression of the times. It is created out of the materials of exactly the kind of alienation from the public culture which Roth described in his essay. Its form is the endless ranting monologue; its content is guilt, anxiety, and acute paranoia; its appropriate setting is the psychiatrist's office where, as was literally the case in *Portnoy's Complaint*, the only sound is the sound of the narrator's voice. Nothing is real in the world except that voice, all our separate, complaining voices.

But the problem with Roth is that he cannot function as his own psychiatrist. He cannot find the meaning of his anguish or his anger: hence, we cannot. All he can do is talk, talk, talk, sometimes brilliantly, sometimes tediously, but always toward a point that is never reached because it does not exist. What he is up to really is—to use his own phrase—a form of literary onanism.

Studying the Tradition

INVITATION TO THE TALMUD: A TEACHING BOOK. By JACOB NEUSNER. *Harper & Row. 263 pp. $7.95.*

Reviewed by JEFFREY MARSH

SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE was supposedly once asked by a Gentile friend: "If the commandments of Judaism and Christianity are the same, wherein lies the difference?" "The difference," he is said to have replied, "is that we obey them." Though the basic assumption of the questioner was wrong, and the devout philanthropist's response considerably overstated the degree of Jewish religious observance both then and now, the exchange does point up the main distinction between the two religions: Christianity evolved out of the idea that the detailed laws promulgated in the Hebrew Bible had been superseded by a new dispensation emphasizing belief over ritual observance. Judaism, on the other hand, refused to draw any distinction between the ritual and moral commandments contained in the Torah, and the main activity of the rabbinic tradition central to Judaism was the exposition and analysis of those laws.

Indeed, Jewish tradition held

JEFFREY MARSH, *who contributed "Images of Einstein" to our December 1973 issue, was until recently on the staff of the Hudson Institute.*

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that even the commandments given in the written Torah were but a partial expression of the divine law; in order to obey it fully, one had to take account also of the oral Torah, handed down concurrently to Moses on Mount Sinai, which explained the unwritten details of the written commandments and also gave sanction to a number of practices not explicitly based on Scripture. The study of the Torah, both written and oral, was itself one of the most important of all the commandments, not only as a guide to the correct performance of the complex and demanding rituals which accompanied the simplest daily activities, but also as an act holy in itself, bringing man into contact with the divine.

For a long time the oral Torah was transmitted from teacher to student via a long historic chain extending down through the generations. During this extensive period of oral transmission, disputes arose about particular points of procedure, so that by the time the basic code of Jewish law, the Mishnah, was put into final form by Judah Ha-Nasi in about 200 C.E., it included minority as well as majority opinions on disputed cases. After the redaction of the Mishnah, the scholarly academies in Palestine and Babylonia continued their study and interpretation for another three centuries, when a final editing process took place and the distillation of centuries of discussion was finally committed to authoritative, written form. This end-product of hundreds of years of the most elaborate textual explication, comprising the Mishnah and its amplification, the *gemara*, is known as the Talmud.

IT is Jacob Neusner's aim in the present volume to introduce the novice to the world of the Talmud, an intellectual universe which he sees as much closer to the 20th-century mind than has been realized. By offering the uninitiated reader a kind of classroom demonstration of the method of talmudic inquiry—a translation of one short chapter from the Mishnah and the commentary (*gemara*) on it, along with his own explication of the logical structure and historical and religious background of the period—Professor Neusner hopes to awaken a new awareness of how much this ancient tradition has to offer modern man.

The particular section selected for study by Professor Neusner is the eighth chapter of the tractate Berachoth (Blessings), which deals mainly with the prescribed order in which the various blessings pertaining to particular meals are to be recited. The Mishnah in this chapter begins with an account of a dispute between the two famous sages and antagonists, Hillel and Shammai, as to whether the Friday night Kiddush prayer should be said before or after the blessing on the wine, and continues with further disputes between disciples of the two schools over the required washing of hands both at the recitation of the Kiddush and prior to the Grace after meals, and over the order and correct wording of the blessings involved in the post-Sabbath Havdalah ceremony and the Grace after meals. The Mishnah concludes with an account of the differing obligations incumbent upon Jews in uttering the "Amen" response after blessings made by Jews and Samaritans respectively.

The laws in the Mishnah are stated directly and in a concise, abbreviated fashion suited to the construction of mnemonic devices and other aids to memorization. The *gemara* undertakes to explain how and where the laws are to be applied by asking a series of questions designed to elicit the necessary information; in so doing it makes use not only of the Mishnah itself and of the laws of logic but also of a body of rabbinic *dicta* not actually incorporated into the Mishnah but dating back to the Mishnaic period. The *gemara* is concerned with the principles underlying the laws stated in the Mishnah; it attempts to reconcile differences among opposing schools of interpretation by analyzing the possibility that apparently contradictory views may be applicable under differing circumstances, and it also seeks to render the correct judgment in cases not treated explicitly in the Mishnah.

Since the degree of intellectual sophistication required to follow the talmudic line of argument is quite considerable, the beginner

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needs a guide to assist him, and Professor Neusner provides such guidance in his explication. But explaining talmudic procedure to the general reader, though it takes up the bulk of the book, is only part of what Professor Neusner intends. His larger purpose is to persuade the reader of the unique claim which talmudic thinking should have on us today—a claim he bases chiefly on the concept of intellectual devotion as itself a kind of religious obligation. This concept underlies the entire talmudic enterprise, and it is one which Professor Neusner believes to be especially well suited to contemporary man, whose relentless rationalism has enabled him to subdue nature but left him spiritually destitute. Professor Neusner suggests that the modern Jewish intellectual in particular, attuned as he is to rational analysis—as the heir to generations of talmudic study—has been left totally alienated by his abandonment of the original religious moorings of his intellectual endeavors. The only remedy for this condition is "what the Sages called Teshuvah . . . a return to the way of talmudic piety and spirituality."

Unfortunately, at this point in his analysis Professor Neusner becomes very vague; indeed, he does not even invoke the term "Teshuvah" until the penultimate sentence of his final chapter. What is traditionally meant by this concept is easily enough understood, however, and quite unambiguous: an individual who has transgressed any commandment of the Torah is enjoined to confess his transgression via a specifically prescribed format and, most important, to refrain from further transgression. If Professor Neusner really means what he seems to be saying—that the study of Talmud should be regarded as a religious obligation—must it not be intimately connected with the forms of observance required by the traditional religious law of Judaism? After all, as Sir Moses Montefiore recognized, it is in practice, not merely in study and contemplation, that the essence of Judaism has always been seen to lie. This issue Professor Neusner seems to wish to evade.

Among the Primitives

TRISTES TROPIQUES. By CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS. Translated by JOHN and DOREEN WEIGHTMAN. *Atheneum. 432 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by FRANK LIPSIUS

THERE is no trick in matching the name Lévi-Strauss with structuralism. One of France's foremost thinkers, member of the Académie Française, and former head of the legendary École Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Lévi-Strauss has skillfully made himself the most romantic Frenchman—and Jew—since Marcel Proust. Discussing structuralism intelligently, though, is another matter. It may take an anthropologist to sort through the differences among structuralism, functionalism, and typology, but Lévi-Strauss's name is more likely to be on the lips of literary critics, sociologists, leftists, and assorted modern romantics. It is not the anthropology that interests them, but rather the way Lévi-Strauss has managed to dignify the primitive savage, humble the Western scientist, and make intelligent conversation about modern society based on cooking methods in a Brazilian jungle.

In short, he has made the modern anthropologist savior of the humanities, in stark contrast to other social scientists—like psychologists and sociologists—who have fallen in goosestepping behind the mechanistic methods of the physical sciences. The anthropologist, to the contrary, combines adventure, intelligence, and social status with a right to define his own distance from society, or so we learn from Lévi-Strauss. He is the master of his destiny, whose controlling passion is understanding his society by braving the unknown in search of others. He does not have to shun the excesses of modern Western hedonism, for he uses them for purposes higher than the venality for which they are intended: "An anthropological expedition into central Brazil begins at the Carrefour Réamur-Sébastapol. . . . In an area of Paris which was as unknown to me as the Amazon, I found myself engaging in strange practices under the watchful eye of Czech importers. Knowing nothing of their trade, I lacked the technical terms with which to specify my needs and could only apply native criteria. I set about choosing the smallest of the embroidery beads. . . . I tried to bite through them to test their toughness. . . ."

Thus does Lévi-Strauss begin his chapter, "The Lost World," in his famous but recently revised and now retranslated autobiography, *Tristes Tropiques*. *Tristes Tropiques* was originally written in 1955 about a Brazilian expedition in the late 30's. Though it is autobiographical and makes no particular claim to scholarly respect, it does reflect—mostly poorly—on the structuralist theories that have given Lévi-Strauss so much notoriety. While fascinating and florid in detail and excitement, the experiences with each group of natives were obviously of short duration (a couple of weeks at most) and conducted through interpreters.

For the layman, there could be no more appealing pursuit than this trip as an armchair Tarzan. The first half of the book sketches the preliminaries of Lévi-Strauss's expedition, from an initial interest in philosophy to a detailed account of the ship over to Brazil and the inland trek through progressively less civilized communities. Then in the second half the author comes into his own, interspersing his sympathetic, observant, and perceptive descriptions of small native groups with accounts of the difficulty of finding them, or inadvertent mistakes that caused offense and could have cost the party dear, or just getting lost in areas where white men were known to have ventured before and never returned. This is the stuff of pure escapism, and Lévi-Strauss, a consummate stylist, knows how to play his punchlines.

The tribes he saw had few more than a dozen members each, as they wandered nomadically through the Brazilian forest. Some lacked women, others fighting men. Some had diseases, which

FRANK LIPSIUS, *a new contributor, is the author of a biography of Alexander the Great which is to be published by the Saturday Review Press in November.*

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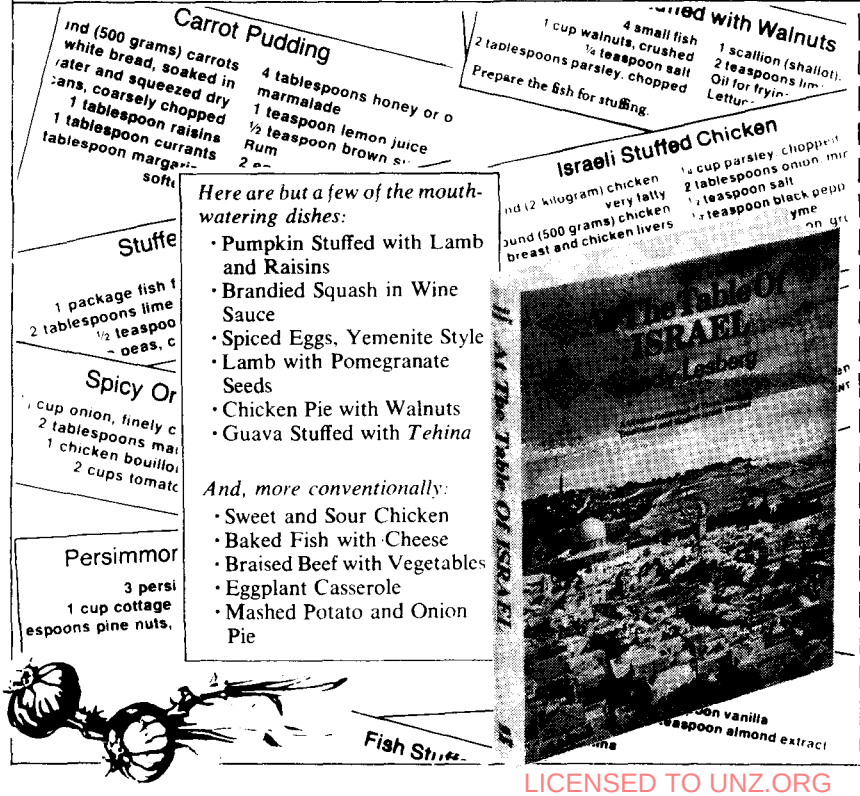

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didn't really interest Lévi-Strauss, but he mentions them in passing just because they are a sign of the white man's contact with the natives, as either infector or healer. He ignores the now notorious attempts to spread disease among the Indians by dousing blankets with infection and distributing them to the remaining tribes. Lévi-Strauss's obliviousness to such crude intrusions on Indian life may be admirable, but his reluctant admission that the Indians were at all plagued by disease comes long after the cheerful stories of his distributing nothing more useful than the beads he got at the Carrefour Réamur-Sébastapol. Having strictly defined his purpose, he was much better able to make use of the natives without offense than were the missionaries, whom Lévi-Strauss patronizes for their willingness to help the Indians and brave their suspicions.

His anthropology is not mechanistic or data-bound. It deals with human beings, but in the professional way that a doctor or lawyer might admire. It involves adventure and danger, but the result is cool and analytical. Part of Lévi-Strauss's achievement has been to bring to the fore just such characteristics of his profession, which are generally hidden behind dry monographs in professional journals. Lévi-Strauss further distinguishes himself from even the humanist anthropologists like Margaret Mead by putting his speculations in the firm tradition of continental social philosophy.

This he does with his comparisons, peppered throughout the book, which are derogatory to our so-called civilized life. Urban living prompts one homily: "Savages have often succeeded in achieving mental harmony with a minimum of effort. What wear and tear, what useless irritation, we could spare ourselves if we agreed to accept the true condition of our human experience and realize that we are not in a position to free ourselves completely from its pattern and rhythm." In most of the tribes, Lévi-Strauss provided Indians with paper and pen to copy down body-painting patterns, many of which are reproduced in the book. In one group, the chief used his paper and pen for random wavy lines in imitation of the anthropologist's writing. The experience prompts another homily, this one about the power of writing as an expression of authority quite apart from whatever is written. Lévi-Strauss speculates that the advent of writing did little more in human history than increase the incidence of slavery: Neolithic man, after all, managed to make tremendous strides in herding and agriculture without writing and, in more recent times, writing has not prevented long periods of cultural stagnation or caused us to live much differently now from the way the Greeks did two millennia ago.

THERE is something obviously attractive about a man wandering lost in a tropical forest, finding scattered tribes of primitive natives, and coming to flashes of insight about the horrible dirty old world he's left behind. The native chiefs hold their authority through a system of reciprocity in which they distribute gifts among the tribes in return for being allowed the privileges of chief. Lévi-Strauss sees the system as the incarnation of Rousseau's speculations on social contract, and the anthropologist lauds his intellectual forebear for abjuring the cruder notions of thinkers like David Hume, who discussed power and forgot reciprocity.

Because of his own findings, Lévi-Strauss sets himself up as a social philosopher capable of mediating among other social philosophers and able to base his position on fact rather than speculation. "I believed that, having been luckier than Rousseau, I had discovered such a state in a moribund society, about which there was no point in wondering whether or not it was vestigial. Whether traditional or degenerate, this society offered one of the most rudimentary forms of social and political organization that could possibly be imagined." This sentence, like Lévi-Strauss's assumed credentials for being a social philosopher, reflects some confusion between primitive and primeval, as though the man who looks at the least developed society can set himself up as arbiter among men discussing the origins of all social behavior. Those who extrapolate about human society from observing animals make the same mistake, but they blithely write a lot of money-making books and win Nobel Prizes—something which neither animals nor primitives achieve, however much they look like the authors.

There is no doubt that anthropologists *are* well placed to be social philosophers, especially ones with the erudition and wide-ranging interests of a Lévi-Strauss. They see various kinship relationships which compare to those in other societies, including our own. They see rituals, rites, and myths which have their counterparts everywhere and reveal a great deal of similarity and difference among societies in the way that variations arise. Lévi-Strauss has been instrumental in showing the sophistication of so-called primitive languages and myths. In *La Pensée Sauvage* he picks out peculiarities of our own societies, like the way we name pets, as reflections on the way we treat animals as compared to societies living closer to nature. The languages of some North American Indians have a logic and complexity that surpass ours and rival Linnaeus's classification of animals in the 18th century. All of this has been influential, but more on humanists than scientists. It tends to irk other anthropologists of the more routine, functionalist school, who take their lead from Malinowski and abjure the tradition derived from Frazer.

STRUCTURALISM has at its core the assumption that the imagination is fundamental to men and their societies. By this reckoning, primitive societies are in some ways more "advanced" than modern ones, though the whole comparative distinction between prelogical and logical societies (with its assumption of social evolution) is discarded. In *Tristes Tropiques* Lévi-Strauss only hints at the way he would assess societies. He admires the way the Bororo tribesmen incorporate ritualistic gestures and religious practices into their lives. "Few people are as deeply religious as the Bororo," he says, but they treat religion with sophisticated casualness. "In one corner, boys would be snoring

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or chatting; two or three men would be humming and shaking rattles, but if one of them wanted to light a cigarette, or if it were his turn to dip into the maize gruel, he would hand the instrument to a neighbor who carried on. . . ." This incorporation of religion into daily life Lévi-Strauss contrasts with the incomprehensible solemnity he found so arid in the life of his grandfather, the Rabbi of Versailles, whose synagogue was so little used that it "was lacking precisely in the human warmth that was a necessary precondition to its being experienced as sacred."

Not as an anthropologist but as a human being, Lévi-Strauss envies the success of the Bororo arrangement, though he assesses its effectiveness in the words of his trade: "Yet the significance of the men's houses goes beyond the function that I have tried to describe, of being the center of social and religious life. Not only does the structure of the village allow subtle interplay between institutions: it summarizes and insures relations between man and the universe, between society and the supernatural world, and between the living and the dead." Here as elsewhere Lévi-Strauss is most distant when referring to his own society and most intimate and solicitous when describing aspects of tribal life that are traditionally held as primitive.

The Church & the Jews

THE POPE'S JEWS. By SAM WAAGENAAR. *Library Press. 487 pp. $9.95.*
THE VATICAN IN THE AGE OF THE DICTATORS, 1922-1945. By ANTHONY RHODES. *Holt, Rinehart & Winston. 383 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN

ONE of the more neglected facts concerning Italian Fascism is that 10 per cent of the country's Jews joined the party, attracted by the same strident nationalism that attracted other Italians. In the first decade of his rule, Mussolini did not intend to encourage anti-Semitism, but by 1937, in part out of deference to Hitler's ripening designs in Germany, the Duce and his followers began to develop an anti-Semitic program which impelled Robert Farinacci, the secretary of the Fascist party, to write in his book, *The Church and the Jews*: "We cannot, in the course of a few weeks, renounce the anti-Semitic conscience that has been formed by the Church through thousands of years."

As Sam Waagenaar informs us in *The Pope's Jews*, the history of the Jews of Rome began at the outset of the Empire in the second century B.C.E. when Judah Maccabee sent two messengers to the Senate. Gradually the number of settlers grew until the Jews became such conspicuous citizens that the historian Suetonius mentioned their wailing at the funeral of Julius Caesar and Cicero grumbled that the Jews crowded the courts. But despite their vigorous communal life under the Emperors, the history of Rome's Jews essentially reflects the ruinous succession of Popes who ruled the city for thirteen centuries.

By virtue of being the oldest continuous Jewish community in the Diaspora, the Jewish community in Rome holds the distinction for the longest history of uninterrupted persecution at the hands of its Gentile neighbors. In 1215, at the urging of Innocent III, the Fourth Lateran Council compelled the Jews of Rome to wear a red domino over their clothing. Other Popes encouraged the burning of the Talmud or purposely changed the Roman market day from Wednesday to Saturday. Pius IV instituted the Roman ghetto and required that the Jews pay for the construction of its wall. Until the middle of the 17th century, during the carnival season preceding Lent, a group of Jews was forced to race down the Corso and suffer the jeers and kicks of the crowd.

A Pope, however, could improve the condition of his Jewish subjects if he cared to. Martin V excused them from forced baptism. In 1585, Sixtus even allowed

JOSHUA RUBENSTEIN, *another new contributor, has published articles and reviews in the* New Republic, Art News, *and other periodicals.*

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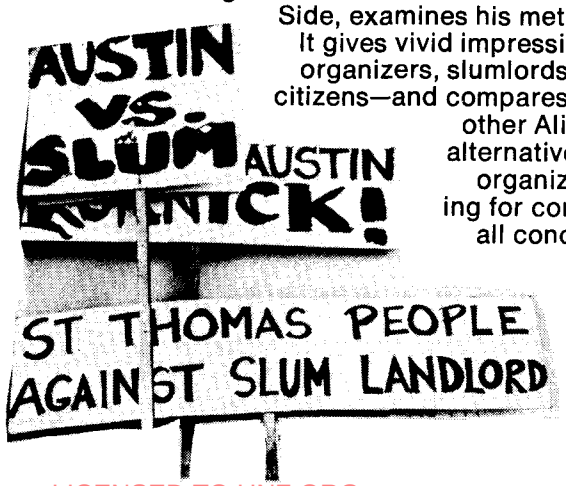

The University of Chicago Press

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Jacques Lipchitz was the last survivor of the grand avant-garde of modern art, the last link with the heroic cubist period of the School of Paris. A friend of Picasso, Braque, Modigliani, and Le Corbusier, his death in May of this year at the age of 82 brought to a close the era in which they effectively revised the twentieth-century image.

Yet if Jacques Lipchitz was one of the first to apply the principles of cubist form to sculpture—and if, as he said of himself, he was "always a cubist"—it is in another sense that he finally commanded international attention. Cubism had always been an art of heroic form rather than of heroic themes. Lipchitz, turning his attention to the grand subjects of mythology and the Bible, forged a style that could accommodate such material. In some ways he ceased to be a modern artist. Working within an emotional climate that recalled the great efforts of Michelangelo and Rodin, he created monumental works that transcended our own time. In so doing he set aside his youthful experiments in favor of an art that would be capable of sustaining his own mature passion and eloquence.

The central figure of Jacques Lipchitz' mythology was Prometheus—who stole fire from the gods and brought it to mankind. Zeus punished Prometheus by chaining him to Mt. Caucasus, where a vulture fed upon his liver until Heracles—with the consent of Zeus—interceded and set him free. For Lipchitz, Prometheus symbolized the triumph of light over darkness, of education over ignorance, of the effective struggle for liberation in the face of arbitrary punishment and hardship. His interest in the figure apparently traces to 1931; but, with the Hitlerian threat of 1933, Prometheus took on new significance for him. By 1936, the Prometheus he created for the Paris World's Fair was not only chainless but had triumphed over the vulture.

It is this triumphant vision of Prometheus—with the Menorah held high—that Lipchitz chose in his last year to express Israel's determined battle for survival and freedom.

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them to live outside their quarter without wearing a distinctive piece of clothing, although shortly after his death another Pope returned the Jews to the ghetto.

While Waagenaar attempts to construct a vivid narrative, his effort is undermined by a shallow approach to history which is only partly suggested by his cliché-riddled style: "Before long Napoleon was out, the Pope was in, the ghetto doors were up, and the Jews were down." Several times Waagenaar falls into crude historical speculation as, for example, when he wonders if a Pope's Jewish doctor exerted influence in the Vatican or whether Mussolini would have appointed his daughter's Jewish fiancé to a cabinet position had she actually married him. (She didn't.) Conjectures like these abound and make his historical account superficial and repetitive.

STILL, near the end of the book Waagenaar does clarify a significant historical incident which took place during World War II. Three weeks after occupying Rome, the German commander demanded fifty kilograms of gold from the Jewish community, threatening otherwise to "resettle" two hundred Jews. The leaders of the community, believing they could not secure the amount, approached the Vatican for assistance and were guaranteed a maximum loan of fifteen kilograms. Although the Jews finally collected the gold without having to borrow from the Vatican, most scholars, and notably Raul Hilberg, have believed that the Vatican did contribute the fifteen kilograms. By interviewing the people who actually weighed and delivered the gold, Waagenaar shows a vigorous regard for truth —in contrast to Anthony Rhodes who, in *The Vatican in the Age of the Dictators,* completely misrepresents what happened. Rhodes contends it was fifty-five kilograms of gold and "three hundred hostages" and that the Vatican "immediately" contributed fifteen kilograms. Although he mentions the incident only in a footnote and the misstated figures are, after all, trivial, his version of this affair reflects the inaccurate and apologetic character of his entire book.

Rhodes presents a less than convincing account of the political behavior of Pope Pius XI and his successor Pius XII toward the governments that sprang up in Europe in the decades between the two world wars. Some of these governments were dictatorships but some were not. In France and Czechoslovakia, in Mexico, for a time even in Germany and Spain, the Vatican had to contend with elected governments that opposed the ubiquitous influence of the Church. Naturally, the Vatican wanted to maintain its prerogatives, especially over education and property. But by the third decade of the 20th century the Vatican was still confusing liberal democracy with atheistic Communism and refusing to reconsider its own role in European society.

RHODES's chapter on Spain particularly suffers from a kind of negligence that is common to his entire work. He describes the atrocities committed by the anarchists, the murder of thousands of priests, and the gutting of monasteries and convents. As these attacks increased during the Civil War, "the sympathies of the Vatican inevitably inclined toward their opponents." Rhodes, however, does not explore why such murderous resentment of the Church should have erupted in a country like Spain, with its overwhelmingly Catholic population and culture. When the Vatican newspaper announced in 1937 that "the Church does not belong to any political or social camp . . . that it stands above the conflict," Rhodes blithely presents the quotation; by the bottom of the same page he is reminding us that the Vatican's sympathies "inevitably inclined" against the Spanish Republic, and neglecting to wonder if the Vatican's statement was duplicitous.

In a later chapter on Anton Pavelitch, the wartime dictator of Croatia, Rhodes again ignores a dilemma his own narrative points out. During the war the Croats, who were Roman Catholics, violently harassed the Orthodox Serbian minority under their control: whoever refused to convert was murdered. Rhodes informs us that 700,000 Serbs were killed while more accepted conversion. Near the end of the chapter he wonders "why the Holy Father did not condemn Pavelitch for such inhumanity" (the dictator was a devout Roman Catholic priest) and naively admits that "the question is certainly pertinent." But he never answers his own question, although his account makes the conclusion clear. In the process of saving souls, in gaining adherents to the faith, the Church acquiesced in the destruction of lives. As the Pope neglected to condemn the persecution of Christians in a country directly bordering Italy, his indifference to events in far-away Poland assumes for us now a cruel plausibility.

WHILE Rhodes bases most of his conclusions on diplomatic messages, the curious omission of one essential document suggests a deliberate attempt to conceal what he knows actually occurred. Five weeks after the Germans entered Rome, over a thousand Jews were deported to Auschwitz. Even Bishop Hudal, the rector of the German Church in Rome, protested the round-up, fearing it would provoke the Holy Father "to take an open stand." The Pope, however, remained silent. Ten days later the German Ambassador to the Holy See sent a letter by courier to Berlin. Rhodes fails to mention this letter but it appears in almost every serious account of the Holocaust and contains the most profound implications. In it the Ambassador, Ernest von Weizsaecker, wrote:

> The Pope, although he is said to be under pressure from various sides, has not allowed himself to be forced into any demonstrative statement against the deportation of the Jews from Rome. . . . He has done all he could in this delicate question to avoid straining relations with the German government. . . . [In an official communiqué] the Pope bestows his fatherly care on all men, irrespective of nationality and race. . . . There is less reason to raise objections to this announcement since the wording . . . will be taken by few people as referring specifically to the Jewish question.

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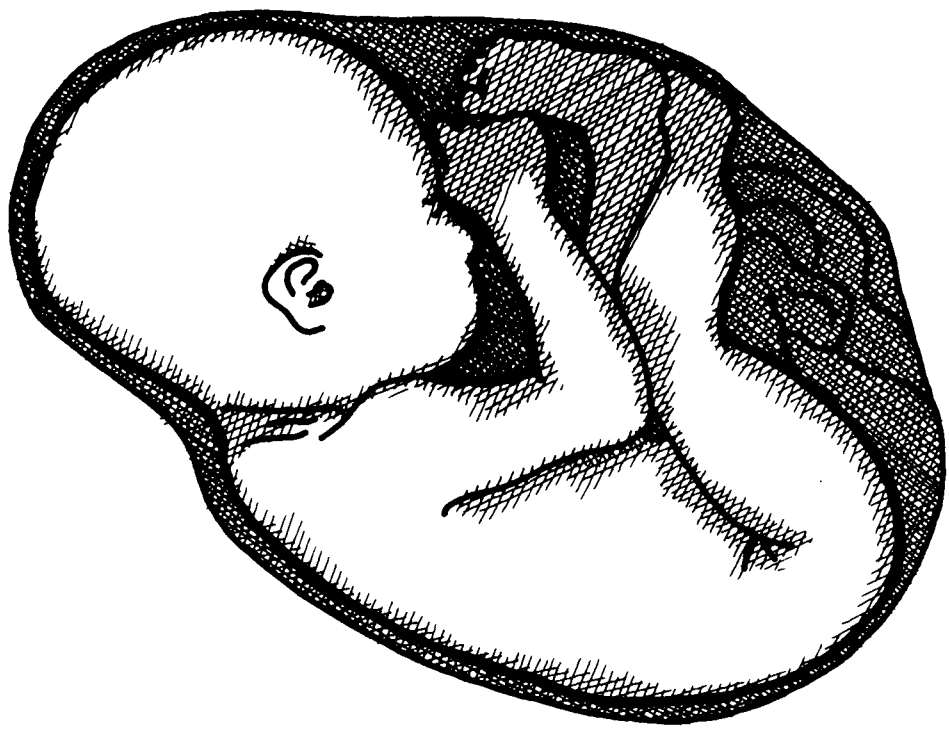

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Radical History

THE SEVENTH HERO: THOMAS CARLYLE AND THE THEORY OF RADICAL ACTIVISM. By PHILIP ROSENBERG. *Harvard University Press, 288 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

THE epigraph to this latest and much-praised book on Carlyle is a quotation from Sir John Seeley: "Politics are vulgar when they are not liberalized by history, and history fades into mere literature when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics." When Seeley applied this doctrine to his own work, he emerged with *The Expansion of England,* which has been aptly described as the "bible of British Imperialists." It is ironic and yet fitting that the same doctrine should now serve as the rationale for a "theory of radical activism." "Relevant" history, it is well to be reminded, can be made relevant to any end; "practical politics" can politicize history in any direction.

If this is the salutary warning we find in the epigraph, Philip Rosenberg intends it only as a justification for his own reading of Carlyle. Carlyle interests him because he "struggled with problems that still confront radical intellectuals today," because his "mature thought constitutes a valuable contribution to radical political theory." About his own convictions and intentions Rosenberg is entirely candid, practical, and very up-to-date: "Indeed, it is one of the primary purposes of this volume to demonstrate that Carlyle's writings, if properly interpreted, can be of considerable use in the development of a theory of radical activism at a time when, after the diffuse and unfocused activism of the 1960's, such a theory is badly needed."

As Rosenberg is very much the committed critic of our time, so Carlyle is made into the "committed intellectual" of his day. He was not only committed in his ideas; he came close, we are assured, to "exchanging the role of the man of thought for that of the man of action." Unfortunately he never quite effected that transformation. It is this tantalizing situation—the near-realization of both the theory and the practice of "radical activism"—that is the subject of Rosenberg's book.

This thesis is said to apply only to Carlyle's "mature thought," the fifteen-year period starting with the publication of his first essays in 1828 and closing with *Past and Present* in 1843. After that his "creative powers" were presumably so fatally impaired that for thirty-eight years he produced works which are "scarcely worth reading and even less worth writing about." True to his word, Rosenberg does not write about them except in passing, and invidiously. Certainly he nowhere tries to prove his assertion of their unworthiness. They simply do not exist for him. They have been negated by a stroke of his pen—eliminated from Carlyle's canon, because they do not fit into Rosenberg's.

One can sympathize with Rosenberg's dilemma. Some of Carlyle's later works (which include his extensive writings on Frederick the Great and on Cromwell, and some exceedingly controversial essays—notably a defense of slavery and an attack on democracy) are extremely distasteful to most readers today, as they were to many in his own time. They are hardly an inspiration for radicals—or, for that matter, for liberals or conservatives. One might even be tempted to admire Rosenberg's audacity in simply ignoring them. But it is Carlyle's audacity that should interest us—a boldness of mind, an apocalyptic vision, brilliantly illuminating and terribly dangerous. Without some analysis of the later Carlyle, it is impossible to know whether Carlyle did in fact decisively change or whether he merely made explicit what had been present in his thinking all along.

It is not enough for Rosenberg to dismiss arbitrarily the great bulk of Carlyle's works. He must be equally arbitrary in his treatment of those works he admits to the canon. No text of Carlyle's, whether essay or book, is discussed systematically, no argument is presented as Carlyle himself developed it. Instead we are given bits and pieces of quotation and paraphrase culled from different parts of a book or from different books, with no regard for the original context, order, or intent. The only principle of selection and presentation is the argument that Rosenberg, not Carlyle, wants to make.

The same method governs Rosenberg's use of other authorities and texts. There are entire chapters in which Carlyle can barely be seen over the heads of myriads of other writers ranging from Aristotle to Arendt. The display of erudition is impressive but hardly does justice either to Carlyle or to the authorities so generously invoked. It is, in fact, this kind of wanton raiding of texts that has given the history of ideas a bad name.

Rosenberg's method deserves dwelling upon because it is typical of the new mode of radical history. And this, it must be said, is radical history at its best, entirely conscious of what it is doing and doing it very well: it is learned, cosmopolitan, unsectarian, exhibiting a lively play of mind, a candid assertiveness, and an admirable intellectual ambitiousness. But in the end, like all partisan histories, it lacks integrity, a respect for things as they were as distinct from how they might or should have been. Carlyle had a term for it: "Spinning Dervishes," he called the Schoolmen whose "antic feats" gave an impression of great intellectual activity but whose gyrations were within the closed circle of their system so that they invariably "ended where they began."

WITH all his detours through intellectual history, Rosenberg too ends where he began—with a Marxized Carlyle, a "radical activist" who fell short of being an actual political revolutionary only because he lacked the courage or sagacity (it is not clear what his exact failing was) to carry out his ideas to their logical conclusion.

The difficulty, of course, is that Carlyle was so little of a political revolutionary, indeed a political activist of any kind, that not only did he himself remain aloof from

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GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB *is the author of* Lord Acton, Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution, Victorian Minds, *and, most recently,* On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill *(Knopf).*

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political action but he made it a point to criticize those who did engage in such action. And he criticized them precisely because all such action failed to affect the "heart" of man. Except in the rare case of the "hero as king," a Cromwell or Napoleon, "action," for Carlyle, generally meant "work" in the most mundane sense of that word. It was ordinary everyday work, the work of the working classes and also of those upper classes who qualified as "master workers," that Carlyle eulogized: "All work, even cotton-spinning, is noble; work is alone noble."

While Carlyle was praising this kind of "action," he was attacking the familiar kinds of political action: working-class Chartism as much as middle-class Benthamism. And it was not only political reforms but also social reforms that he objected to. Cooperative schemes, allowances for the agricultural poor, the repeal of the Corn Laws were all variants of the "nostrum," the "Morrison's Pill," dispensed by quack doctors pretending to cure spiritual diseases with material remedies. And lest it be thought that Carlyle attacked such reforms merely because they were palliatives, insufficiently radical or revolutionary, he made it clear that "sans-culottism" was as ineffectual as "constitution-mongering."

In the face of this clear retreat from political action—revolutionary or reformist—Rosenberg can only deplore Carlyle's "inability to give any specific content to his activist doctrine," his refusal to provide a "content to complete his idea." But the fact is that Carlyle did not fail to give "content" to the activist idea; he never had that idea in the first place. The idea is entirely Rosenberg's.

ROSENBERG can indulge his fantasies about what Carlyle might have or should have said because he cannot take seriously the one idea Carlyle took most seriously: the idea of God. To Rosenberg Carlyle's concern with God is a "distraction," a "redundancy which we can well afford to ignore." Others may find it not so easy to ignore. It may, to be sure, be difficult to define. Carlyle had no commitment to institutional or ritualistic

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religion. And perhaps he was not a mystic in the ordinary sense; although when he thought he recognized a kindred spirit in the young John Stuart Mill, he was pleased to announce: "Here is a new Mystic." What was unquestionably involved in Carlyle's religion was a profound sense of man as a spiritual and moral being, and a passionate rejection of the kind of man conjured up by the *Zeitgeist*: materialistic, mechanistic, utilitarian, rationalistic, liberal. His most memorable invectives were directed against the "foul and vile and soul-murdering Mud-Gods" of his age. Utilitariansim was "pig philosophy"; material progress was "Mammonism"; rationalism was "Dilletantism"; laissez-fairism was the "freedom of apes"; parliamentary reform was "constitution-mongering." They were all murderous because they denied the divine nature of man; they saw only what was external to him (the trappings of his clothes —one of Carlyle's favorite metaphors) and nothing of the inner man, the soul that made of him a man rather than an animal or object.

In one sense or another, religion was behind all of Carlyle's principles and prejudices. Work itself was defined in religious terms: "All true work is Religion. . . . *Laborare est Orare*, Work is Worship." And political authority was illegitimate unless it had the sanction of religion: "It is not by Mechanism, but by Religion; not by Self-interest but by Loyalty, that men are governed or governable"; "There is a God in this world; and a God's sanction, or else the violation of such, does look out from all ruling and obedience, from all moral acts of men." To Rosenberg all this is a "distraction" and "redundancy." But most readers may find Carlyle's own dictum more revealing: "It is well said, and in every sense, that a man's religion is the chief fact about him."

Even when Carlyle was addressing himself to social issues, such as the famous "Condition-of-England Question" (the condition of the working classes), he did so more in the spirit of a religious prophet than of a social reformer or political revolutionary. In his discussion of *Chartism*, Rosenberg makes a great deal of Carlyle's demand for more statistical information to provide a "true assessment of the economic facts of life." This is put in the context of the much debated standard-of-living question: whether the material conditions of the working classes improved or deteriorated as a result of industrialism. But this question is precisely what Carlyle was not debating. He did criticize economists and statisticians for collecting figures about wages and prices without regard for such vital information as the availability and regularity of employment or the facility and habit of saving. But he also, and more sharply, criticized them for supposing that any collection of material facts could ever exhaust the question of the condition of the working classes, which was a question of "disposition" as well as "condition," of justice and injustice, of right and wrong.

And so, too, the famous "cash-nexus" phrase, coined by Carlyle and taken over by Engels and Marx. For Carlyle it had quite different implications from those it later acquired. To Carlyle the idea that men were subject to the principle of supply and demand in the same way that material goods were, that the only connection among them was "cash payment," was an affront to the spiritual character of man and the moral character of the social order. If the socialist finds it easy to endorse Carlyle's critique of laissez-faire capitalism, he must also recognize that Carlyle never intended it as an affirmation of human equality or a call for class struggle and social revolution. On the contrary, he regarded laissez-fairism as immoral because it encouraged the upper as well as the working classes to forfeit their moral obligations and responsibilities, to abandon the natural relationship of masters and workers, rulers and ruled.

Carlyle had, in fact, no objections to an aristocracy; he only objected to an "idle aristocracy," an aristocracy unwilling to work or to rule. For the "working aristocracy," the "Millocracy," the "Captains of Industry," he had considerable respect. Unable to banish such sentiments from the canon of the "worthy" Carlyle (they do, after

The 4,000 years war.

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all, appear in *Past and Present*), Rosenberg takes them as the first symptoms of his failing powers. He then compares him unfavorably to Marx who had taken a true measure of "socioeconomic conditions" But if this invocation of Marx does not quite settle the issue, neither does the belittling of the Captain-of-Industry theme. For the fact is that the latter was an integral part of *Past and Present*. "*Laborare est Orare*" legitimized and dignified the master-worker as much as the working man. It is this that so sharply distinguished Carlyle's idea of work from Marx's. To Marx the labor theory of value carried with it the idea of surplus value. Marx's capitalist, therefore, was an exploiter, taking from the worker what rightfully belonged to him. Carlyle's Captain of Industry was as properly and legitimately a worker as the working man; he was an "organizer of labor" who brought order out of the chaos of competition and individualism. He was, in fact, the modern hero.

If Rosenberg is less embarrassed by Carlyle's Heroes than by his Captains of Industry, it is only by virtue of a radical reinterpretation of the hero. This reinterpretation prompts a savage and quite unwarranted attack on Sidney Hook.* Hook has criticized Carlyle for positing an omnipotent hero who, in determining the course of history, must be presumed to be "responsible for the very conditions of his emergence and effectiveness." To Rosenberg this interpretation is a "fantasy" so "totally unrelated to anything Carlyle wrote as to be beyond contradiction," a "parody" whose "pernicious effects are beyond computation." Rosenberg counters with a Carlylean hero who does not presume to determine "reality" but rather reflects it, who is "shaped and conditioned by the world around him," who acts only when "historical developments have prepared the way for his mission." It is a neat reduction of the hero to manageable Marxist proportions. But it is hardly borne out by a reading of *Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. There the heroes, the "great men" of history, appear as "modelers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators." The "reality" reflected by the hero is not the historical, social, existential reality of "the world around him," as Rosenberg has it; it is rather a vision of a divine, "primal reality," an idea residing deep within the hero.

All this is very far from Rosenberg's version of Carlyle's hero: an amalgam of Hegel's "world-hero," Weber's "charismatic leader," and Mao's permanent revolutionary. (Rosenberg's Mao, it should be said, is a revolutionary bent upon perpetuating the revolution.) One almost forgets that Carlyle's political heroes were Cromwell and Napoleon, and that he presented them not under the title of "The Hero as Revolutionary" but rather "The Hero as King." And they were his heroes precisely because they were kingly, because they brought order out of the chaos of revolution. "While man is man, some Cromwell or Napoleon is the necessary finish of sans-culottism." This is hardly a recipe for permanent revolution.

If Mao is an unlikely cohort of Carlyle, Marx (even the "young Marx") is no more likely. Rosenberg makes a strenuous effort to convert Carlyle into a revolutionary who would do for "The English Revolution" (this is the title of Rosenberg's chapter on Chartism—not, as one might think, on Cromwell) what Marx did for world revolution. But if he is to be a serious revolutionary, he must also accept the doctrine of "economic determinism," because without this, we are told, there would be no assurance either of the inevitability or the success of the revolution. Unfortunately, Rosenberg regretfully admits, Carlyle failed to see what Marx so shrewdly saw: that the necessary contradictions of capitalism would lead to its inevitable collapse. "Without these factors to rot the system from within, Marx recognized, there was nothing to pre-

* While I am defending Hook, I might take the occasion to defend others of Carlyle's biographers and commentators from Rosenberg's aspersions. He says, for example, that the "conservative" interpretation of Carlyle has so generally prevailed that no one has challenged the contention that Carlyle was an ideologue of fascism. But a great many writers, including Basil Willey, G. B. Tennyson, and Michael Goldberg, have done just that.

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vent the coming revolution from going the way of all peasant and artisan uprisings from the 15th century to the 19th. With them, however, one had every reason to be sanguine about the results of the proletarian revolution."

It is difficult to believe that in passages such as these we are being invited not to criticize Marx but to applaud him. In view of the experience of the past century, one might think that it was Marx who was being unduly "sanguine." Yet our attention is repeatedly drawn not to Marx's but to Carlyle's "mistake," "failure," "striking inadequacy," "missed opportunity."

But there is a more serious perversity in this method. To find fault with Carlyle for not being an economic determinist is to find fault with him for being himself. If we take seriously Carlyle's attack on the "pig philosophy" of the political economists, we must also recognize that Marxism stands condemned on the same grounds: it is no less materialistic and utilitarian; it makes a virtue of interest, denies the divine spirit, rejects the ordained order of authority, and is committed to the idea of the "economic man." The Marxist can go along with Carlyle up to a point. But even then he must recognize that the similarities between Marx and Carlyle were superficial, that what motivated Carlyle was a vision of man and society profoundly different from the Marxist one, and that that vision would, sooner rather than later, make for radical divergences between them.

CARLYLE was, in fact, *sui generis*. One says this about every important thinker, but it is more conspicuously true about Carlyle. He cannot be assimilated to any ideology or movement. One can see why Rosenberg, trying desperately to bring him within a tradition of thought he understands and respects, confesses to "frustration amounting at times almost to anger."

One can also understand why Rosenberg ignores a subject that has preoccupied most of Carlyle's readers and commentators—his peculiar style. By writing as he did—allusively, metaphorically, eccentrically, passionately, sometimes scatologically (the latter decently rendered into German)—Carlyle insistently and aggressively asserted his uniqueness. There is no mistaking the authorship of any passage in Carlyle, whether in his most casual letters or his most carefully composed works. He made no concessions to the ordinary conventions of language or the proprieties of sentiment. It is as if he deliberately put his readers on notice that he was not to be confused with anyone else, that he was to be accepted as he was or not at all. And what is truly remarkable, what a critic could profitably explore at length, is the number of people who did accept him with all his idiosyncracies and difficulties. Eminent Victorians who had little in common with each other joined in attesting to his influence upon them: Mill, Arnold, Dickens, Disraeli, Kingsley, Ruskin, Swinburne, Thackeray. He is even reputed to have had a large audience of working-class readers, although it boggles the mind to think of them ploughing through his abstruse, convoluted prose.

Taking that extraordinary style and influence together, one can only agree with those commentators—John Holloway most notably—who regard Carlyle not as a historian, philosopher, political theorist, or man of action, but rather as a prophet and sage. His jeremiads were far more radical than the radical schemes of the activists. In the name of "primal" truths, he denounced not only laissez-fairist capitalism but all the "mud-gods" of modernity. It was this root-and-branch criticism that impressed so many of his contemporaries. They did not always agree with his specific ideas (on the subject of slavery, for example), and they could not themselves go so far as he did in rejecting materialism, utilitarianism, secularism, egalitarianism, and the rest of the modern ethos. But he did voice their innermost doubts and bring into the open the "dirty little secrets" of their age. And for this they were grateful and respectful.

IF I have gone on at such length about this book, it is because it seems to me typical, in substance and method, of a significant tendency in historical and literary scholarship. Marx once rebuked the Young Hegelians for wanting to "interpret" the world when the point was to change it. "Radical-activist" scholars of our own time seem intent upon changing the world by reinterpreting it.

Victorian England presents a special challenge to these radical revisionists because it blatantly defies the Marxist schema. That the most advanced industrial and capitalist country in the world should have been spared a revolution appeared to the liberal historian, Elie Halévy, as the "miracle of modern England." But to the radical historian it is a standing reproach, an anomaly that has somehow to be explained away. It is a situation calculated to inspire the most strenuous intellectual efforts. Thus one historian after another is discovering in 19th-century England a revolutionary working class engaged in incipient or abortive revolutions which, but for fortuitous circumstances, would have succeeded. The fact that Marxism does not normally permit fortuitous circumstances to interfere so decisively with the processes of historical materialism has not diminished the enthusiasm of Marxists and non-Marxists alike.

Now it is the literary critics who are taking up the cudgels of revisionism. Like the radical historian in search of a revolution, the radical critic seeks out his revolutionary heroes. Steven Marcus concluded his recent book, *Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class*, with the assertion that Engels was "in a number of fundamental ways a representative Victorian." In the same spirit Rosenberg offers us a Carlyle who was fundamentally (save for a fatal weakness) something very like a representative Marxist. We can look forward to other such unlikely reincarnations.

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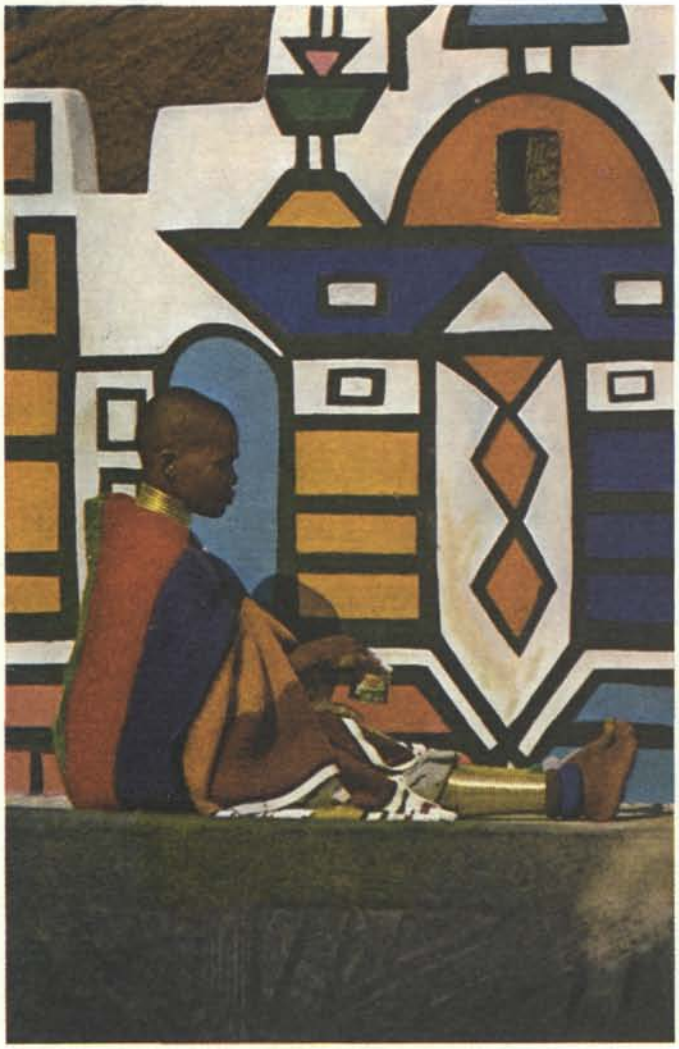

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